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**GREENLEAF THEATRE  
ELEMENTS**

III.  
**Production**



By  
**Constance  
Smedley**

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ENGLISH













# Greenleaf Theatre Elements

By CONSTANCE SMEDLEY

(Duckworth

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## 1. ACTION

*Contents* : Mental Make-up. Classification. First Steps. (Foot and Leg). Reaching out (Arm and Shoulder). Fine Points (Hand and Fingers). Trunk Calls (Torso). Looking Ahead (Head and Eyes), etc. *Examples from Shakespeare, Galsworthy, Euripides, Jerome, O'Neill, Greenleaf Rhythmic Plays, etc.*

## 2. SPEECH.

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*Teacher's Times*



III.  
PRODUCTION



# Greenleaf Theatre Elements

## III. PRODUCTION

By  
Anne CONSTANCE SMEDLEY *Armfield*



DUCKWORTH  
3 HENRIETTA STREET,  
COVENT GARDEN,  
LONDON,  
W.C.

and The Greenleaf Theatre Studio, Ringwood, *Hants.*



*Printed by Arthur's Press, Ltd.,  
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Glos.*

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English

## DEDICATION

To my friends who are

TRAIL - MAKERS

to the old world

WILLIAM POEL

to the new

SHELDON CHENEY

STARK YOUNG

620578



The material in these Elements is drawn from the Lectures, Directors' Courses, and Classes 1916-1925, given at the following

UNIVERSITIES :

Columbia, N.Y.  
California.  
Leland Stanford Junr.  
New Mexico.

COLLEGES :

Mt. Holyoke, Mass.  
Smith, Mass.  
Mills, Cal.  
Municipal, Bournemouth.

INSTITUTE OF FINE ARTS :

Chicago.

THEATRES :

Margaret Morris, London.  
Community Theatre, La Jolla.  
Greek Theatre, Berkeley, Cal.  
Allied Arts, Berkeley, Cal.  
Punch and Judy, N.Y.  
Winthrop Ames Little Theatre, N.Y.

DRAMA LEAGUES :

Los Angeles, Cal.  
Evanston, Chicago,

GREENLEAF SUMMER SCHOOLS :

Woodchester, Glos., 1922.  
Ellingham, New Forest, 1923.  
Ibsley, New Forest, 1925.

These handbooks are the outcome of a desire to set forth the technique of the theatre in so simple and concise a manner, that it can be studied in textbooks. It is hoped that they will prove stimulating to actors of experience as well as illuminating to beginners, and that they will aid original observation, invention and expression, rather than provide formulas which can be followed without thinking. At the same time, the art of drama is now taking a recognised place in educational curricula, and hence the inclusion of definite rules and exercises.

Two plays only are given as examples as this process of production is intensive and lengthy : the method and rules can be applied to any type of play with equal usefulness. Shakespeare, and a formal verse play, written for this particular method of production, have been chosen because they serve the purpose as well as any other, and both are fresh in the author's mind.

The problem of lighting has been touched on, incidentally. It will be gone into exhaustively in a future "Element."

As in "Action" and "Speech," "Production" merely gives elementary practical instruction. Nine other "Elements" are in preparation, in which the problems of Rehearsal ; Minstrelsy, (song, poem, and story), and other phases of drama will be handled. These form the necessary prelude to advanced text books, dealing with the deeper aspects of expression. Until producer, actor, and audience have an elementary working knowledge of synthetic technique, the deeper and greater Art of the Theatre of which Gordon Craig is the prophet, cannot be attained. These handbooks are a humble contribution to its understanding.



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\* See Greenleaf Element (1) Action.

† See Greenleaf Element (2) Speech.





FIRST DIVISION

Idea

## I.

# Idea

- PLAYGOER : Well, what is this something which is not words, but for presentation to the audience ?
- STAGE-DIRECTOR : First tell me, is not an idea something ?
- PLAYGOER : Yes, but it lacks form.
- STAGE-DIRECTOR : Well, but is it not permissible to give an idea whatever form the artist chooses ? . . . . .  
I am now going to tell you out of what material an artist of the theatre of the future will create his masterpieces. Out of ACTION, SCENE, and VOICE. Is it not very simple ?  
And when I say action, I mean both gesture and dancing, the prose and poetry of action.  
When I say scene, I mean all which comes before the eye, such as the lighting, costume, as well as the scenery.  
When I say voice, I mean the spoken word or the word which is sung.

*" On the Art of the Theatre "* Gordon Craig.

Before a play can be produced, it is essential that the leading Idea of the play is clearly perceived : the underlying Idea which the plot unfolds, and which is worked out through the characters. The whole Idea must be grasped before we can analyse and study its component parts. If the producer holds in mind the leading Idea from start to finish of production, story and characters will shape clearly, and convincingly, and the play will be substantial and satisfying in effect.

Take for illustration " The Winter's Tale," whose leading idea is the invulnerability of Innocence, however assailed. Hermione may be imprisoned and dethroned, Perdita exiled and disinherited, but the final reinstatement of Mother and Daughter and their protection during their period of obscurity, works out the Idea and all the trials that ensue are only to test and make more evident, the impregnable character of Innocence.

But supposing one thinks of the story before one has analysed its general purpose. The dramatic value of Leontes' outbursts, Hermione's wrongs, Paulina's failure to move the hard heart of Leontes, Polixenes' abuse of Perdita and her banishment, may become the chief issue in the producer's thought, and may be so stressed in production that the shining radiance and strength of the chief Idea may be obscured: whereas Leontes' wrath is proven powerless to destroy his child and wife, Perdita's banishment restores her to her father's home, and to her mother: and each attack but proves the powerlessness of evil to affect the ultimate triumph of good. The simpler the Idea, of course, the easier is the producer's task: nor must it be forgotten that different producers will see and bring out different Ideas, though no production will be satisfying if a subsidiary idea is mistaken for the Chief Idea, and proportionately stressed. The \*sevenfold method of production, however, will be found to entail a keenly searching process of analysis, and few Subsidiary Ideas will be able to mask effectively as Leading Ideas by the time the process is completed.

There are five aspects of production which need to be considered in each Division: five ways in which the Idea is given form.

- (a) Stage and Elevations.
- (b) Scene.
- (c) Actors.
- (d) Properties (portable).
- (e) Costume.

EXAMPLE: AS YOU LIKE IT: SHAKESPEARE.

Here the leading Idea is Escape from Subjugation: we behold the captive Rosalind escaping with Celia and the Fool. Duke Senior and his Court seek and find moral freedom in the Forest: Rosalind "the chaste and inexpressive she" is freed from the restraint of feminine convention: Orlando is freed from his brother's domination, and develops self-reliance and manhood.

#### (1) STAGE AND ELEVATIONS.

This play is set in the confines of a Court: then in the confines of a Forest. Openness should be avoided: the Idea of (a) restraint, (b) shelter, should be sought after. In each act a central space with a surround of devious exits and entrances can be arranged. From

\* See Contents

elevations around the central space, the actors descend into the arena, this giving the desired impression of (a) imprisonment, (b) shelter and seclusion.

The sides of the amphitheatre will afford opportunity for different aspects of the Idea, different scenes being played at different elevations : these elevations may be merely indicated, or as high as the stage will permit.

(2) SCENE.

A dark background will intensify the shut-in-feeling, whether the prison-like effect of the Court, or the mysterious shelter of the Forest. The sides of the stage should be well screened, to aid the appearance of enclosure. The fundamental distinction between the Ideas conveyed by the Court and the Forest environment is, however, the openings in the latter : the Forest is full of avenues and vistas. Study of the play will show how much depends on the Forest inhabitants being able to look out of their place of refuge, being able to take long views and watch their fellow actors come and go. Hence while both Court and Forest are enclosed, the sides of the Forest should be pierced by avenues.

(3) ACTORS.

The idea of escape or flight calls for a more or less suppressed style of acting, relaxing into ease and quiet. The general idea of Court behaviour, with its intense formality, should be maintained : peace is the dominating idea of the Forest : the protection of Nature. At the same time, the enervating effect of the Court must contrast with the rougher setting of the Forest : fiercer strides, bolder movements, easier poses in the latter should be adopted, although the surrounding entanglement of the trees around and above invokes caution and a certain restraint of movement. The fact that on many stages where an architectural or curtained setting is used, there will not be much impedimenta, should not prevent the actors from moving and speaking and feeling as if they were in the depths of a wood. Vigour of movement can emphasise the distinction between the idea of imprisonment and that of freedom.

(4) PROPERTIES.

In the court scenes, hand properties should be a feature : fans, pomanders, heavy rings, bracelets, strings of jewels (suggesting

shackles): the idea of idle hands employed with toys: fettered by conventional custom: neither free nor useful.

In the Forest, properties should be utilitarian and suggestive of contact with the Forest: knives that whittle: sticks and staves: trails of woodland vines rather than garden posies: appropriate fruits, not the apples, oranges, and bananas usually provided for the feast, but nuts and berries, and wild grapes.

### (5) COSTUME.

Heavy draperies, trailing robes, puffing and stuffing, should suggest the superfluous luxury of the Court: the confining impedimenta of fashion's devices should be studied: elaborate gloves and handkerchiefs and headgear: everything that gives a sense of inconvenience and weight: Subjugation and Restraint.

In the Forest there must be escape from this bondage, together with a sense of wear and tear. Oliver, seeking Orlando, is described as being in rags, and needing fresh apparel, so stern is the Forest treatment of Court clothes. Spick and span Orlandos, Rosalinds, and Celias, in satins or sateens fresh from the dressmaker's: Dukes in velvets: shepherdesses in muslin, will destroy all sense of the wildness and roughness of Nature. Stout and simple fabrics, homespun and leather, not too dark or pale or bright, but more or less suggestive of the mottled and subdued colours of a Forest, will help the atmosphere. Remember nearly all have escaped from pursuers and do not wish to challenge attention. So with the practical utility of the clothes: footgear without heels: hose of wool or thread but never silken: boots that protect but are not heavy: garments that allow free play of limbs: and headgear that will not tangle in the branches. The best receipt is for the actors to spend a day in a wood, when costumed!

The designer's palette, set with a phantasy of rainbow hue: the costume book telling us that such and such Elizabethan garb was worn, are of use in their place: but the first place must be given to the Leading Idea.

EXERCISES.—1. *In which scenes do the characters shew themselves*

(a) *captive*

(b) *free?*



2. *What is the low-water mark of Rosalind's*  
     (a) *captivity*  
     *and the high water mark of her*  
     (b) *freedom?*
3. *Trace the influence of the freedom of the Forest on these*  
*characters as they escape into it: Orlando: Celia:*  
*Duke Frederick: Touchstone: Oliver.*

## EXAMPLE: THE FORTUNATE SHEPHERDS:

CONSTANCE SMEDLEY.

The Idea in THE FORTUNATE SHEPHERDS is *the growth of independence.*

We shall see the different situations clearly determined by this vigorous Idea, freeing the Shepherdesses from their tempters, releasing the Shepherds from their dependents, urging the Shepherdesses into self-reliance, liberating them from sentimental ties (even to their beloved Common), and pushing the despondent and repentant Shepherds into defence of their calling: finally this Idea makes Shepherds and Shepherdesses independent of the Gipsies, by opening their eyes to the value of their own stream through which the Gipsies had brought the colours into being which had lured the Shepherds to the town. They show themselves able to protect and use the stream, and exchange their dye-stuffs for the Miners' coal, instead of allowing them to use the stream without reciprocity!

This Idea therefore shows itself to be a purifying and invigorating force, and as the Idea developes, the changes in the general relationships should be clearly marked so that everyone can perceive and understand the Idea which the play is illustrating.

## 1. STAGE AND ELEVATIONS.

As openness and freedom are to be expressed, the stage should be free from clutter. A central elevation should suggest the apex of a hill, clothed with trees. The Bower, therefore, must appear solid: the trees rising from a firm base, from which they can be swayed by the wind, but where they will remain fixed.

## 2. SCENE.

We need a spacious background to carry out the idea of liberty. Pale, vague colours give a sense of space: positive bright colours

bring the background near. A pale sky, curtains of lavender or pale gold, blue, or grey. The sides of the stage should be left open—not hemmed in with trees. Better the proscenium arch, or straight pillars, or curtains the same shade as the sky.

### 3. ACTORS.

Independence calls for a sturdy, vigorous style of acting: groups should form in defiance of the groups that seek to keep them in bondage: the process of breaking free should be stressed.



### 4. PORTABLE PROPERTIES.

The Shepherds' crooks are the most important portable properties: they can symbolise in line:

- (a) the herd instinct, dependent on each other, close-packed, through fear:



- (b) wildness, each crook at a different angle, when liberty is first attempted.



- (c) discipline: in regular line: again, typifying the herd, or group:  
 (d) brandished erect and high, typifying independence.

- |                              |   |                            |
|------------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| (e) downcast                 | } | All signifying dependence. |
| (f) prone on the ground      |   |                            |
| (g) hooking on to the actors |   |                            |

The expressive possibilities of the crooks should be kept in mind throughout.

### 5. COSTUME.

Growth of the idea of independence can be shown through the changes in the type of costume worn: the swathing of the gipsies when they first appear as servile pedlars, is followed by the throwing apart and brandishing of their rags in their outbursts of defiance. The long-skirted shepherdesses, stride about in abbreviated tunics and high boots when they are shepherds, and when they don skirts, after this experience of independence, they kilt them to the knee. The shepherds, bound with the ribboned fineries of the town, lose them in the fight. They also assume their homespun cloaks on their return, as a symbol of their taking up the responsibilities of the shepherds' calling: yet they show by the new way in which they wear them, that they feel free.

EXERCISES.—1. *In which scenes do the shepherds show themselves*

- (a) *dependent?*
- (b) *independent?*

2. *What is the low-water mark of the shepherdesses' dependence: and high-water mark of their independence?*

3. *Trace the growth of independence in:*

- (a) *any shepherds: and*
- (b) *any shepherdesses.*

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~~P 20~~ <sup>Plagues Handl</sup>  
Selding - Chap II

Chapter VI

~~Gwendolyn Dwyer~~

~~7-3515~~

SECOND DIVISION  
Method



## II.

# Method

"Sometimes artist and director are the same, as with Pitoëff in Geneva and Paris, or with Knut Ström in Gothenburg. In such a case, setting, direction, and acting are one . . . . . Put him upon an almost naked stage, and he must not only make his actors far more expressive in voice and feature, but he must also do fine things with their bodies and their meagre surroundings. This is far easier for a pictorial artist than for the director, who is usually an actor without a well-trained eye."

KENNETH MACGOWAN and ROBERT EDMOND JONES

"Continental Stagecraft."

---

Now that the Idea is perceived, there comes the question of the method of production.

Is it to be formal, or naturalistic? Too often, this means, are the dramatic effects to be considered or unconsidered?

Let it be clearly understood, Nature and Art are things apart. One uses Art to give an appearance of Nature: and in Dramatic Art, one's effects must be able to be repeated with absolute certainty, in widely varying conditions. One cannot leave effects to the inspiration of the moment of contact with the audience, although that inspiration may quicken and warm the effects already devised. The producer not only must be absolutely clear about the effects he wants to produce: he must be as clear about the method of their production.

Producers are leaning to the formal method because they find it brings out the essential points of a play more convincingly and arrestingly than a "realistic" rendering which aims at photographic imitation of scene, dress, and manners.

Let us remember that idea, story, characterisation, atmosphere, have all to be unfolded simultaneously and that the audience must not be distracted from the general *purpose* of the play by a redundancy of detail in any direction. While the audience has its opera-glasses on a buhl cabinet or a genuine 17th century armoire, it is not back in the period: it has been temporarily transported to an antique-shop state of mind. When the house rises with a gasp, like a drawn-out fish, at the silver tissue mantles, whose cost has been so widely



advertised, do not forget your fish is gasping because it has been drawn out of its natural habitat into an extraneous element. You have hanked it out of the waters of life, where it was breathing-in Ideas, into the suffocation of materiality. As for a producer who is under the delusion that the expense of his production adds anything to its merit—let us hank him out of his delusion and dip him deep into the well of Truth—to drink or die.

Now for the method of presentation.

Will it depend on the place where the play is to be presented? Not entirely. A production should be capable of being presented in many places. Therefore effects should be obtained as far as possible through the actors, who will always have to be part of the production. This includes visual effects.

We are dealing with the elements of production : and with those elements which can be studied and practised independently of mechanical organisation. Lighting can be carried to any degree of complexity : but first let us get a clear idea of the absolutely necessary elements of expression.

Dramatic production falls into three categories :

1. Abstract Elements,
2. Related Pattern,
3. Atmospheric Relationship.

#### FIRST METHOD.

Expression by means of abstract elements may be said to be the barest possible statement of the idea and the story. In this method, a plain background is essential : actors would appear in some simple uniform, and the properties used would be of the simplest form.

But the idea, story, characters, could be worked out quite clearly and consistently : the form of the play, its grouping, movement, and sound, would be expressed. One would not attempt great subtleties of characterisation, though the walk and gesture of each should be in character, and the grouping carefully planned. There would be simple movement, and not too much of it : simple staging, with the minimum of equipment, and that merely suggestive, and not naturalistic : and a simple method of acting, not too emotional or subtle. The producer would have to maintain consistency in method throughout all the means of production. The introduction of an

elaborate "real" tree or built-up woodland knoll with moss, flowers, leaves, etc. would not be in keeping with a simple uniform against a plain background. As far as possible the effect should be frieze-like. The chief thing is to avoid distracting or confusing accessories of any kind.

#### SECOND METHOD.

The second method involves greater complexity: the background can be expressive, and change in colour and shape; indeed, the shape and lines of the scene and properties become of great importance. The costumes, too, are more elaborate: and the movements more complex. Colour now plays an important part, also patterned stuffs; and the shapes made by the actors, singly or in groups, must be considered in relation to the background. The play is a continuous procession changing from scene to scene and yet the impression is that of a decoration: a richly patterned tapestry or a frieze in low relief.

Intelligent and strongly defined acting is in keeping with the deliberate use of voice as a tonal pattern in harmony with the visual pattern.

#### THIRD METHOD.

The third method involves atmosphere, light and shadow, the use of tones. Directly a mechanical system of lighting comes in as a main factor, questions of material equipment loom large. The producer of to-day wants to be able to ensure his effects, in any kind of hall, and with the minimum of material equipment. Therefore it is well for him to study other means of obtaining atmospheric effects, than through the aid of artificial light.

His chief problem in all three methods of production will be the avoidance of shadows, but a top-light immediately against the back-cloth will help towards this, and strong lights with reflectors from the front or at either side will give sufficient illumination. If his pictures and effects are built up with colour and tone in the scene and costume, his production only needs to be revealed clearly: and this can be done by flat lighting, or even by daylight.

Effects of darkness, of moonlight, sunlight, shadow, mystery, obscurity, etc., can be obtained by the right manipulation of costume,

scene, movement and voice : to these effects, lighting can be added : but the producer should never allow himself to feel dependent on elaborate mechanical devices.

In this atmospheric method of production, a more subtle and intimate method of speech and movement can be evolved. Action and diction are not as clear-cut. Pauses and stillness are used more ; and conversely, the dramatic emotions are more stressed. Instead of presenting an objective picture, the producer appeals to his audience's imagination subjectively : the audience supplies a great part of the drama. The aim of the producer is to start the audience thinking, feeling and imagining the emotions in the play.

The qualities and conditions expressed in the general environment of the drama as a whole, or scene by scene, need to be clearly indicated. The mental environment of the most naturalistic play should be analysed and deliberately expressed. It is not enough to place the actors in a photographic representation of a place : the whole line of thought, generic and typical, that built up that place needs to be considered, and then expressed. What qualities does it represent ? For example, in a modern drama, does the *mise-en-scene* express :

1. Arrogance ; and self-complacency ? (patrician).
2. Ostentation ; and fear ? (parvenu)
3. Limitation ; and acquiescence ? (blindness)
4. Limitation ; and resentment ? (imprisonment)

Now all these questions, in some degree, need to be considered in each method of production : but in atmospheric relationship, they become of most importance. And if the producer starts to think out his production from this mental basis, even though the audience doesn't always consciously understand his intention, his production becomes indefinably more individual, interesting and convincing.

There are other points also to be decided. Are the actors to be regarded as players communicating directly with, and conscious of, their audience ? Or are they to merge into the characters they represent, even though they communicate with the audience in their respective characters ? Or are they to be so merged in the mental environment of the drama, that they are entirely remote and unconscious of an audience ?

Each method belongs to the three methods of production, before indicated. In the first, players can carry on the scenery or properties and frankly tell the audience what the characters they represent are doing, have done, or intend to do. They make no pretence of being real : and when they act, with however much gusto they enter into their task—they are aware that they are players.

In the second method they may confide their woes and joys and plans to the audience as to a confidante : but they are real people.

But in the third, they are welded inseparably with the play's environment, and appear unconscious of the audience.

For all methods of production, all the rules given in these Elements of Production are applicable. We call these different methods but they are merely varying stages of one right method : and the use of fundamental laws and rules will solve most difficulties.

#### EXAMPLE : AS YOU LIKE IT.

##### STAGE AND ELEVATIONS.

*Method I.* Trestle platforms placed at either side and at back of stage.

*Method II.* A formal arrangement of steps around the stage ; a circular platform, or mound in centre of stage for forest scene : a small platform extending from the right hand steps for Orlando's orchard.

*Method III.* A built-up knoll in planes : sloping banks around stage : a flight of formal steps introduced to mark the Court scenes.

##### SCENE.

*Method I.* Plain backcloth.

*Method II.* Embroidered, patterned, or plain contrasting curtains or screens, rearranged to mark change between Court and Forest.

*Method III.* Plain or painted backcloth and wings : curtains as treetrunks disappearing into flies : a formal arrangement of bush-like forms for Court scenes, irregularly diversified for the Forest. Avoid pattern, but stress structural form in the suggestive shapes of the masses.

## ACTORS.

*Method I.* Directness and simplicity in speech and action: bringing out the chief dramatic issues without stressing the by-play of the more subtle relationships and issues.

*Method II.* Definite dramatic "pictures," strongly marked contrasts both in characterisation and the sequence of "situations" in the play. Extremely definite objectives in the form of climaxes, attained through related voice and gesture.

*Method III.* More subtle and complex expression of character and interrelationships. Mass effects used sparingly: greater dispersion of interest, enveloping the minor characters, and using them unexpectedly as main factors.

All the same, the actors must keep the structural form of the play clearly in mind, and know what they have to bring out conjointly.

## PORTABLE PROPERTIES.

*Method I.* As few as possible, and simple and unnoticeable.

*Method II.* A prominent part of the general pattern.

*Method III.* Significant in form though sparingly used.

## COSTUME.

*Method I.* A uniform, slightly but clearly differentiating between the sexes.

*Method II.* The full resources of pattern, colour, shape, can be employed.

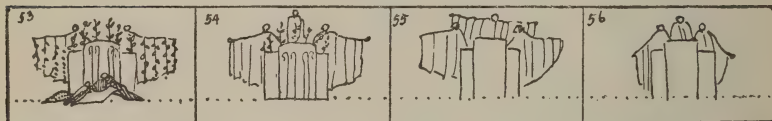
*Method III.* Effects gained by significant form, and tones, and contrasts, the chief figures being brought out in tone and colour, without startling differences. No shock of the eye, no great insistence on the visual: this method of production depends on subtle variations.

- EXERCISES.—1. *Design costumes for Act I, Scene I, in the three methods.*  
 2. *Plan the chief climaxes to be stressed in the three methods. (these may vary)*  
 3. *Study Rosalind's part in Act IV., Scene III., in the three methods.*



## EXAMPLE: THE FORTUNATE SHEPHERDS.

- EXERCISES.—1. *Design costumes for shepherds and shepherdesses in the three methods.*
2. *Design a bower (including movement of the Dryads) in the three methods.*
3. *Study the Gipsies' parts in the three methods.*



*Trees and Bower, Method II.*

THIRD DIVISION  
Form



### III.

## Form

“ . . . . . the characteristic form—the element corresponding to the ‘significant form’ or formal beauty which is the essential mark of creative painting, sculpture, or architecture . . . . . I do not pretend to be able to define it ; but I believe that these elements enter into its effectiveness in reaching the spectator’s consciousness : some sort of crescendo (?) form of action or story, words used tonally as well as literally, re-enforcement of mood by designed lighting, background, movement and colour, and acting that is less personal than character-revealing.

A distinguishing feature here—I am anxious not to evade it, as so many commentators and workers have—is reliance on story development . . . . . It may be hardly more than a loose arrangement of improvisations on a certain theme, or it may move as swiftly and inevitably as a Greek tragedy, but the flow, the disposition of events, the unrolling, is of its essential character.

SHELDON CHENEY : “ Modern Art and the Theatre.”

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A play has to be performed in many different conditions and places ; and the form of a production is modified by the place where the play is to be presented. If it is to take place on the floor of a circus, the grouping will be different from a production on a raised stage at one end of a hall ; again, a square, deep stage of an opera-house needs different arrangement from a long narrow stage : and an indoor production surrounded by a roof and walls is quite a different problem from a production in a field or open place, where there is not even a background.

This chapter on the form of a production will deal with generic production, adaptable to all sorts of conditions, and which does not depend on the scenery or lighting for dramatic effects.

If the right relationships expressed through the right sequence of grouping and movement which constitutes the structural shape of the play, be achieved, it will be found that a production can be adapted to many types of stages. One may place any type of scenery around it, adopt any system of lighting, space out the groups, keeping their relative proportions intact, on any sort or size of stage.

First, how to produce the Structural Form?

The audience is going to watch a group of people come into sight and move about on the stage, passing from one relationship to another. Their actions will produce differing relationships: and their actions and relationships will be actually seen in a series of groups or scenes.

The producer, therefore, should visualise his play as a series of groups, and remembering that actions speak louder than words, he should take good care the actions of the players and the groups they get into are not only natural, but expressive: they should illustrate the idea of the play, and tell its story clearly: the rules of Art must be observed and beauty obtained by balance, restraint, and clearness of purpose. Nor must the need of variety be lost sight of: the grouping, or pictures, should be thoroughly varied so that the audience's interest is held throughout. Drama is an art of surprises: though every surprise must be so inevitable and natural, that it gives the effect of truth. If the producer arranges one scene with recumbent players and follows it with players erect, and the next scene with players in active movement, the action and grouping in each scene must tell the story convincingly and be a true transcript of life. Players at peace, or weary, or very keenly absorbed in discussion, might reasonably be motionless for a continued period, but not if they were playful or angry, (unless their anger was white-hot, and then theirs would be the intense stillness before an explosion—a *waiting* stillness when movement is temporarily held).

\*The producer should look at the different scenes of the play from a bird's-eye point of view, first seeing how the scenes divide up and what each scene should picture; and then seeing which scenes build up to the climaxes, and then allotting different kinds of movements to each scene, and settling the different kinds of grouping.

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\* A William Poel production is a good exposition of this method. He strips the stage of impedimenta, dexterously arranges curtains and screens into some semblance of architectural form—so unobtrusive that few would notice the consummate mastery of balance and proportion in his simple arrangements, and then unfolds a rhythmic frieze in movement. His form is fluid and alive: scene after scene shapes into rhythmic pattern, each with its own judiciously apportioned movement, and grouping: each on the exact portion of the stage which that scene should inhabit: each with minutely and exquisitely varied exits and entrances, as well as its appropriate pattern of sound, and even a different method of acting whose subtle variation is always in harmony with the style of the whole presentation.

This process of seeing the play as a continuous whole, will solve many problems that puzzle and worry producer and audience alike : both are prone to look at a scene only from the viewpoint of its given space of time : whereas each scene must be considered as part of the entire structure, immediately and vitally affected by the preceding scenes, and contributing inevitably in its turn, to the effect of the succeeding scenes.

A scene some way back may completely destroy a subsequent effect : the audience will think the fault lies in the scene they are at present witnessing, so will the producer and the actors : they will change their methods, rewrite the scene, wrestle with the full force of their will power to "get it over" : whereas, all the time, a scene which went very well, or which appeared innocuous, is the real source of the trouble.

To illustrate : supposing a scene of shepherds departing, were played restlessly throughout, with shepherds and shepherdesses moving in and out, rising and sitting, with the idea of keeping things moving, and breaking up the scene (how terribly apposite this phrase often is ! ) instead of the first restlessness shaping into combined formal action as the *issus* become grouped, (the generic male adventurer against the generic home-keeper). And then, supposing the shepherds danced off, chased by their sweethearts, who returned to travel up and down about the stage, each giving vent to her grief as emotion moved her.

What effect would the ensuing scene of an entrance of a Farmer and his daughters produce ! Merely a repetition of bustle and restlessness, and hence this next scene would fall flat.

But if the formal movement, Dalcrozian in its discipline, of the shepherds' scene, had been followed by an almost stationary scene of huddled mourners, the sudden eruption of a gaily coloured bunch of rustics, full-skirted, bustling, "bouffantes," eddying and rising and falling like balloons, horizontal rather than vertical in the lines they make as they curtsey and bob, driving the shepherdesses into a rock-like group around which the waves bubble—would have the piquancy of an effervescing draught in a solid meal.



On the other hand, if the Farmer scene were played in a static way, with the players merely grouped and (more or less) motionless until each spoke, the dance would fall flat, as an interpolation, and the subsequent Shepherdesses scene, *which should be static in form*, depending on sweeping solo-movement by each shepherdess in turn and minor reactions from others—this finale of the act would be a mere repetition of the previous scene and would also lose. The bustle of the Farmer scene must be without any cessation, to ensure the desire of the audience for a change to comparative stillness, and individual movement in place of chorus.



Hence, when a scene falls flat, let us remember the eternal need of variety, of contrast; let us search the play to be quite sure of our parts, and above all, do not blame the actors unless their fault is very clear. When one can only bring against the actors a vague accusation of "not holding the audience," without knowing exactly why they are failing, let the Producer look within—the structural form.

#### ✓ EXAMPLE: AS YOU LIKE IT.

The play of "As You Like It" provides numerous opportunities for contrasting scenes, and contrasted acts. Let us take a bird's-eye view of each act, to determine the general Form and the process by which it shapes into visibility.

#### ACT ONE: THE CAPTIVES.

Bring out the tyranny of Court manners, the artificial gentility of wealth and power, by the actors maintaining a formal etiquette. This can be observed *by all* in

- (A) punctilious salutations.
- (B) the use of fan, gloves, handkerchiefs, pomander balls.
- (C) dignified carriage and steps.
- (D) serious facial expression varied by set smiles.
- (E) furtive use of eyes, indicating fear and constraint.
- (F) subservience to Duke Frederick.
- (G) general restraint and an air of being on guard.



Orlando's simplicity and shyness emphasise his feeling of being "out of it" through lack of education in Court manners and exercises.

Remember that Rosalind and Celia will move like the people around them "to the manner born," and Touchstone will also be a Court Fool, used to Court manners.

#### ACT TWO : ESCAPE.

The forest freedom, with its atmosphere of happiness, peace, and kindly service should completely change the mien of all.

This can be shown by :

- (A) universal amiability.
- (B) free and easy walk and relaxed attitudes.
- (C) helpful and friendly actions.
- (D) the use of knives to whittle, sticks to peel, grass and flowers to plait in chaplets, forest fruits (nuts and berries).
- (E) gentle and quiet movements.
- (F) kindly friendship with Duke Senior.

The entrance of the exiles, should, however, denote the hard passage they have had in escaping. Their weariness and wretchedness should be constantly maintained, so that the kind welcome of the forest can be the more marked. But remember, escape after restraint is marked by relaxation. In Act One everyone is keyed up tightly : in Act Two everyone is relaxed.

Jacques takes his ease in melancholy, relaxed and enjoying his sadness. Rosalind and her companion express the influence of the forest peace by relaxed attitudes : they give up struggling on.

Orlando will be cured of his delusion that it is a savage place, by feeling the peace and gentleness stealing over him.

The players must move and act as if they were really in contact with the solemnity and shelter of a forest.

#### ACT THREE : THE CHASE.

An act of excitement and pursuits : as if the entrance of the Court people had set up a chemicalization of the forest elements.

Orlando's opening speech "Run, run, Orlando!" gives this idea of a fire running through the trees, crackling and stirring in the sombre restfulness. This is an Act of constantly repeated situations, and the similarity of the lovers' problems and disappointments should be brought out. Shakespeare has brought his fine Court ladies and gentlemen to share the circumstances of the shepherds and find their common humanity.

The actors should bring out the general theme of pursuit.

- (1) Touchstone pursues Corin (with his wit).
- (2) Rosalind pursues Celia (with her curiosity).
- (3) Jacques pursues Orlando (with his inquisitiveness).
- (4) Rosalind pursues Orlando (like a saucy lacquey).
- (5) Touchstone pursues Audrey.
- (6) Silvius pursues Phœbe.
- (7) and Rosalind chastises her (with her tongue) until
- (8) Phœbe falsely pursues Silvius in her pursuit of Rosalind.

#### ACT FOUR : THE KILL.

This is an Act of fulfilment : the quarry is run to earth : the deer is killed : Rosalind reveals her love for Orlando : and in turn has a "killing" effect on Phœbe : Celia's bright eyes conquer Oliver. In contrast with the preceding act, this is more or less stationary, depending on interesting static grouping of each scene which wakes into movement and culminates in a definite situation.

We may call it an act of situations.

The mock-marriage of Orlando and Rosalind.

The killing of the deer.

The delivery of Phœbe's letter.

The giving of the napkin.

The departure of Rosalind.

Let the actors keep fairly stationary in movement but ardent in feeling, driving up to a series of set pictures.

#### ACT FIVE : THE CELEBRATION.

When one has to produce a concluding act, without suspense or surprises, its interest depends largely on the method of its presentation. The producers and actors must provide the excitement by their art. Last acts of comedies are usually a winding-up, and while the pace must be rapid, it must also be remembered that the tale is not told until the curtain falls, and that a succession of surprises has to be provided till then, if not by the author, by the producer.

The fifth act is largely a pattern of dance and music with the Fool as principal.

Hence Touchstone's pranks should be heightened into nimbler capers : Orlando and Oliver can run across, all enthusiasm and haste :

Rosalind in boyish guise can pace the stage with Orlando, with Silvius and Phoebe entering for a clearly defined "Round" or "Ballet," as near a dance-song as they can get without actual music: this rhythmic patterning of the verse should be emphasised by the rhythmic movements of the quartet; and immediately on this, follows a genuine part-song, wherein—so cunning is the contrast—the singers are seated so that song follows dance, and provides a charming relief for the processional final scene, and Touchstone's twirling mockeries—a Morris jig to wit, with the stately wedding ceremonial, the sudden interruption (the arrested action to call attention to Jacques le Boys' announcement) and the final rustic revelry from which Jacques withdraws, and Rosalind emerges for the Epilogue. An act so beautifully constructed, should please as a beautiful pattern pleases: and the company should unite in its execution with no other thought than giving the varied pattern its full scheme.

#### 1. STAGE AND ELEVATIONS.

In the first act the prison-like court can be indicated by hemming in Rosalind with a wall of Courtiers, etc., and keeping Duke Frederick looking down on her: even Celia can be on an elevation, above her. Work from the top of the surrounding elevations keeping her encircled and pressed down.

In the forest scenes, a centre boulder or knoll, will help Rosalind to command the situations, and give something to hide behind, or chase round, or over. Vary the action of the chase, scene by scene, using the elevated sides, up or down, where people can escape, as well as the dodging round the centre knoll.

#### 2. SCENE.

A formal arrangement of lines and masses in Act One, should be diversified irregularly in the Forest Scenes: the return to the Palace being indicated by a return to formal arrangement. This can be easily done by altering the position of the curtains and screens. The forest itself should change, growing into greater beauty and "blossoming like the rose" as Act Two develops, becoming more secret for Act Three: and bearing almost a sinister air for the excitements of Act Four. Think of the forest as having its own part in the structural form of the play.



3. ACTORS.

The chafing, fear-stricken constraint of the first act, the second act showing the first stage of Escape, weary and at last able to rest, builds up to the third act, where the actors are more active and secure, and coming in fruitful and busy contact with one another: the style of acting should increase in vigour.

The fourth act should be uniformly dashing and dramatic, building up to one climax after another, with Rosalind's betrayal as culmination, full of tensility and passion.

The fifth act is a rapid scherzo, and can hardly be taken too quickly or light-heartedly, as all, at last, are revealed to one another, and all problems are rapidly unwound and solved.

4. PROPERTIES.

The properties that figure most in the structural form are Rosalind and Orlando's love-tokens.

- (1) The chain she gives him (a symbol she has made him her captive).

This should be made much of by Rosalind, and worn throughout the play by Orlando. He should hide it from Duke Senior when relating his story, but it should be caressed and played with when he thinks of Rosalind and encounters her. Celia remembers it at once (Act Three, Scene Two). How charmingly Rosalind could indicate it when she accuses him of being "rather point-device in your accoutrements."

- (2) The napkin Orlando sends to Rosalind.

It should be associated with him from the first: removed out of his hand when summoned by Rosalind: put with his doublet ere he wrestles: taken up again when the bout is over, and in his hand when he speaks with Rosalind: seen again when he is with her: so that when Oliver gives it to Rosalind—it is familiar to all.

3. COSTUME.

The form of the play can be helped by the costume bringing out the unfair treatment of brothers: first, the wealthy Oliver, and the plain-garbed Orlando, with the second son Jacques, kept at school and profiting thereby in manners—should all have a family likeness, and be signalled by a likeness in costume, differentiated by their circumstances: Oliver's wealthy costume being torn to rags in his

forest wanderings, and restored to decency by Celia! The brotherhood of Duke Frederick and Duke Senior can be shown by similarity of likeness and attire, differentiated again by their circumstances. Again, when Adam changes from Oliver's servant to Orlando's, he should remove the badge peculiar to Oliver's household.

Duke Frederick's Court and Duke Senior's lords should wear an insignia denoting their respective allegiance: Touchstone keeping Duke Senior's crest (which Rosalind also incorporates into her attire). This clearly marks out the relations of the actors.

Also, when Touchstone returns to his banished master, and presents Audrey to him—she as well as he may bear Duke Senior's insignia. The linking up of principals with their groups, helps much in the classification and revelation of the general structural form.

#### EXERCISES: AS YOU LIKE IT.

1. Mark out the principal scenes, and notice how each act is built up.
2. Make a picture-script of the first and last "picture" of each act. For those who are under the delusion they cannot draw, the Child's Guide to Art is advised.

A square for head, an oblong for body, lines for thighs and forelegs; upper and forearms: oblongs for feet and hands. The square becomes an oblong for side-face, a circle for back of head; add some distinguishing mark—a skirt for a woman, long for a princess: short for a wench: boots for a cloak for a Duke: Rosalind, etc., etc.

3. Work out the Forest acts, deciding which scenes shall centre round the central elevation: be played in part behind it: be played on either side, using three steps of an encircling elevation.

#### EXAMPLE: THE FORTUNATE SHEPHERDS.

##### STAGE AND ELEVATIONS.

If the stage is divided into thirds, both in width and breadth, that is in nine sections, and the actors are grouped exactly, it will be easy to keep the proportions of grouping, whatever size or shape the stage. One extends or decreases the area in any direction, proportionately, keeping the relationships of the actors in scale.

The size of their steps, and force of their movements, must be proportionally altered. The numbers of their steps must be multiplied, and the time of their speeches and accompanying gestures increased or decreased, but this, least of all. The time of a play should not vary greatly: on a big stage the players must move a great deal more quickly and freely than on a small stage: just as dancers would have to quicken and enlarge their steps to cover more ground. But the music would remain the same for the dance: and the speech-music, the element of sound, is more or less static in its form.

Space out the scenes upon the stage, bearing in mind the symbolic significance of the placement, and having due regard to the nine divisions, the three sections upstage and the three down. Preserve your downstage effects for the most intimate scenes or speeches. Keep the centre, also, for special effects. Arrange scenes on definite, alternate sides. Make the fullest possible dramatic use of stage and elevations.

## 2. SCENE.

The story must not only be told through the medium of the actors' movements, but also through the shapes and colours of their costumes and the things they carry. The scene is the background of the story. We must know what form it is going to take before we design the scene. If we employ striking patterns on some of our costumes, the background can make the effect more striking or can muddle or confuse it. If we are going to depend on a sudden introduction of a blaze of scarlet, magenta and violet, of what avail if the eye has been previously fixed on a large area of pink? If we want to give a shock by using colour, we must reserve that medium. On the other hand, if we want a continuous stimulant, there is no reason why we should not avail ourselves of the comparatively large area of the setting; and key the whole act in one tone. Hence it will be seen that the lines, the shapes, the quantities of colour used in the structural form made by the actors must all be considered *before* we develop our setting.

Again, if spears, staves, or crooks are to be carried, one should endeavour to emphasise these vertical lines through using the background at certain times: if we introduce a tall window, or a tree, a great effect of culmination can be obtained by running the spears or

staves up against the window or tree, which in turn continues the lines upwards. It will be seen that the producer must consider the setting as a genuine active aid to the movement of the play, whatever the method. For example, the Bower has to come into action through the Dryads of the trees that constitute it, who appear at intervals. As the Bower expresses a central idea of shelter and protection, with the bank beneath it, its place is obviously in the centre of the stage. It may be made of painted or embroidered screens, osiers, or plaited boughs, but whatever method of production is chosen, the Bower must form an opaque screen, be capable of entrance on either side, and taller than the upright Shepherds. Nor can it open inwards or outwards when the Dryads appear, as this would give a sense of disturbance and insecurity instead of an amplified sense of protection and shelter of the Shepherdesses sleeping on the bank. But if the Dryads appear over the top of the Bower, it will grow in importance when they emerge, and this will mitigate against their scene being played so far up back.



The Dryads form part of the Bower, and so a means of linking the performers with the Bower has to be devised. One method is to arrange a fringe of boughs rising over the opaque top: if the draperies of the trees are decorated with the same vertical lines and conventionalised leafage as on the Bower, there will be no shock of contrast when the Dryads are seen partly behind the leafy screen. Moreover the draperies of the flowing, cape-like sleeves can be extended by sticks, *a la Loie Fuller*, and masses of waving leafage can be indicated, rising and falling with the players' movements, that always remain part of the Bower. However simple, or pictorial, or subtle, or realistically suggestive, design your scenes in relation to the action of the play!

Exits and entrances should be carefully studied with a view to maintaining and creating the general atmosphere of the Idea and its setting. In "The Fortunate Shepherds" the way out and in

should be completely unimpeded, so that all have plenty of room for action as they come on and go off, and for their properties as well. If there isn't much room, attitudes for exits and entrances must be devised which will give the impression of players entering from, or retiring into, plenty of space in the Forest scenes.

To sum up, the decoration of the scenes should be studied, to see how the general grouping and movement can be aided by definitely relating it with the background design. Some scenes may stress the height of the Bower by keeping the actors recumbent or seated in its shade: at another time the players may extend from it on either side, making it the apex of a triangle, and stressing the converging lines towards it: at another they may build up to it in a pyramid: at another, they may extend its lines horizontally.

### 3. ACTORS.

Each group of actors should study their scenes throughout the play to see the general idea of each scene, and to get quite clear as to the general structural changes of their own scenes.

The Shepherds will realise:

- (1) General suppressed excitement.
- (2) Outburst.
- (3) Defiance.
- (4) Momentary tenderness.
- (5) Spellbound exit.

If each actor gets the structural shape or form to which his group or scene contributes clearly in his mind from the first, it will colour but not interfere with his characterization.

A question often asked, is about the method of acting. Should the actors be naturalistic or formal? In the simplest productions, as in the most complex, they should be naturalistic in individual touches, but formal when the exigencies of the drama causes them temporarily to merge into a mass.

For example, when each shepherd defies his shepherdess, individual character is shewn: but when the shepherds unite in the purpose to leave them, and the shepherdesses unite in their desire to keep their swains, then one cannot follow eight people simultan-



ously ; but one can watch group action, and behold the opposition of shepherds and shepherdesses in mass formation.



The more united the thought or intention of a group becomes, the more unified will be their action : the group is expressing a group emotion. But just as in life, groups break up in individuals, so—when the action of the play brings individuals to the front, the actors should act as individuals, each clearly characterised.

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Each shepherd or shepherdess is distinct: the group of shepherds is distinct from the group of shepherdesses, but the massed groups of both are different from the Farmer or Miner or Gypsy group. The circumstances and pursuits of each group have given each member distinguishing characteristics, and these must be maintained, although at the right moments, the particular characteristics of the actors in each group stand out prominently.

#### 4. PROPERTIES.

Properties must neither distract or attract attention to themselves except as integral parts of the story. They are hieroglyphics which the producer uses to tell his story. They are also part of the visual pattern, they can be noticeable or unnoticeable at his decision, and according to when they should or should not attract attention : but they must never be unconsidered : never assembled or used haphazardly : never left to be produced for the first time at the dress rehearsal !

If the Producer and company together can see the properties as a means of intensifying and making clear the structural form of the play, they will add greatly to its interest by the intelligent use of what are too often "unconsidered trifles."

\* Note emergence of individual, 76.

Take the baskets in the first act : the Housewife's : the Gypsies' : the Shepherdesses' (for the feast). Not only will the shapes be different and characteristic : but they will be used as part of the design. The Housewife will hold hers when she dances : it will be flat and bag-shaped. The Gypsies' will be Eastern and exotic, and will suggest depths of unrevealed mysteries, revealing a tempting wealth on the surface. The simple, silly Shepherdesses will bring shallow, tray-like receptacles, made charming with garlands. The use of all these, will help to diversify the scenes : and producer and actors must decide when they will be introduced with most dramatic significance.

If the chief properties can be seen as contributing to the development of the Form of the play, interesting use of them will certainly be made.

### 5. COSTUME.

The general form of the play can be gone through from the point of view of the general structure of the costumes in the different scenes.

- (1) The Shepherdesses : simple, clinging, modest : devoid of pattern or allurements.
- (2) The Housewife : solid and conventionally cumbersome : though practical. A wealth of accumulated stuffs—bonnet, cape-collar, full sleeves and full skirts, apron, cuffs, etc.
- (3) The Gypsies : careless and ragged, but with wild bedizements suggesting evil natural forces : the sinuous and the bouncing types expressed in patterned tatters—garments that whirl and flap and make commotion.
- (4) The Shepherds : tunic-clad, solid and simple, expressive of out-door activity.
- (5) The Farmer and daughters : circular and compact, like cheeses or double daisies. Expressing comfort and well-being.
- (6) The Miners : rough and shambling, garments suggesting the pressure of underground. Their shirts and trousers should be loose in opposition to the Shepherds' trimness.
- (7) The circular homespun cloaks of the pretended "Shepherds" should suggest the sternness and severity of winter.



The method of costuming the actors should have some purpose—of helping the drama to become more vivid. Methods of costuming may be too haphazard—too incidental—too much a question of each actor's personal taste: or they may be too ornamental, too appealing and distracting, too much of a decoration. When the producer is trying to express *his* personality, attract attention to his method of costuming, there is no more distracting influence to weaken the dramatic clinch of the Story and Idea. Let the costumes express the actors: and help them to express the emotions of the play.

EXERCISES: THE FORTUNATE SHEPHERDS.

1. *Study the picture-script and separate and classify the scenes.*
2. *Pick out the scenes which build up to the Bower.*
3. *Work out the use of the baskets.*

FOURTH DIVISION  
Movement

## IV.

# Movement

“Seami, who was born in 1363 and who with his father stands at the head of the No, taught his pupils that in imitation there should always be a tinge of the unlike . . . . . If one aims at only the beautiful, the flower, as he calls it, will be sure to appear. If, for example, in the part of an old man, the actor, merely because he has noticed that old men walk with bent backs and crooked knees and have shrunken frames, sets about to imitate these characteristics, he may indeed achieve an effect of decrepitude, but it will be at the expense of the flower. And if the flower be lacking there will be no beauty in the impersonation. What this actor should study, Seami says, is that effect of will without the corresponding capacity for action that shows in old age, and this effect will often be given best by making all movements a little late, so that they come after the musical beat. For in old age the limbs are heavy and the ears slow; there is the will to move but not the corresponding capacity. With this in mind the actor may then be as lively as he pleases.”

STARK YOUNG : “The Flower in Drama.”

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A stage is not a chessboard and it is not enough to move figures about on it, though incidentally a move makes all the difference in results even on a chessboard. Directly a new element enters into the scene, either in the form of an individual or a group of people, everyone on the stage is affected, just as if you introduce a new colour into a scene, the other colours are affected.

Before the actors get far with studying their lines, the whole play should be soundly scaffolded in a practical and tested way. The specific character of each act should be as real and inevitable to them as their exits and entrances : each actor should grow up in the consciousness of his relationship with all the other parts : and study his part from the first, not as an isolated unit, but as part of the whole.

To build an interesting structure, we must keep the main issues strong and visible, but at the same time each section (or Act) should be considered as a separate part, and be contrasted accordingly.

First, study each Act and see how it has unfolded the plot. Compare the first and last speech of the same.

What is the main theme of each scene, the point we are going to bring out through the help of *all* the actors playing therein?

Not only should the general character of the scene or act colour the interpretation of each player's lines; it should influence principals and supers alike.

The general character should first be determined in movement.

- (a) How much actual physical } — Stationary: or gentle:  
movement is involved } lively or tumultuous?
- (b) What type of movement? Regular: irregular?  
Gradual or sudden?  
Continuous or occasional?

But every fresh element introduced should have some visible effect upon the other elements given. One cannot introduce living people, concerned in the events that are happening, without them affecting their companions in some way: and when we are presenting a complex picture of many relationships and inter-relationships set forth before the audience all together instead of in a number of small acts or scenes, we have to be particularly awake to the possibilities of visualising group relationships.

Here is where we need to be aware of the limitations of our technique as well as to its resources.

We must get our effects by simple ways: we must watch that we do not break up and confuse gesture with too much detail. We can use our groups as simple masses and repeat group action, that is, first one group may move in one unified action, then in another. Then we may break up our groups into clearly defined parts and move them in an orderly way, for instance, two lines of actors together (137, 138) and then alternately (139-140). And lastly we can use the units of a group when we want to spread out the attention of the group over a lengthy speech.



The chief value of confining ourselves to this rule of repetition for the groups, is that the individual actors with their varied movements will tell out more clearly against a background of simplified movement. Then in our groups we shall frequently have the less experienced members of our companies, and the simple repetition is easier to grasp and to perfect. Finally, we only give the audience as much as it can assimilate comfortably. If we demanded too much from its attention, it would become surfeited with complexity.

When a person plays a thinking part, it is of the utmost importance that his thoughts should be actively helping the action, and also the unfoldment of the inner meaning of the play. You cannot express anything until you think it; if you think richly, deeply and significantly, your actions will be varied and significant: if you think in a stereotyped way, your actions will be dull and inexpressive.

The importance of drama is the enrichment of understanding and experience that ensues, and not a member of a crowd or a group in the biggest production but should grasp, enjoy, and study to the full the entire significance of the drama. And if the groups and the crowds have intelligently studied their relationship to the principals, what a wealth of knowledge and understanding they will gain, and how comparatively easy the Director's task becomes when he is working with living intelligences which will co-operate and understand. Too often he has to herd his crowd and groups about, meeting passivity or even the resistance of ignorance. No one has a copy of the book—no one has studied it. The first step is for each participant to study the whole play.

But when inexperienced actors get on to a stage, how can they achieve rhythmic and beautiful expression through bodies which have never been trained to express and whose natural instincts are by no means rhythmic?

Always begin at the beginning. If we get back far enough, there is always a simple first step, and then a simple second step. Everybody can strike one note on the piano. Let the thinking Actors realise the importance of accuracy. *Accuracy* in time and space; in pitch and volume; in posture, gesture and step. To produce unerring effects you must move and speak unerringly.

All cues for the actions of groups, principals and crowds must be the words spoken in the play; or, if pauses ensue, the actual

counting of beats. A pause, one, two, three, four, a movement, someone raises a hand; five, someone takes a step; six, the entire group moves forward. So much for pauses. Now for words as cues. The action of the groups and crowds is always illustrative of the word. They form the accompaniment to the principals.

The movement of groups should be regarded as interpretative dancing to the meaning of the word—not to the sensuous music of the rhythm only. So all movements must be arranged on the exact beat of the word, and the thinking parts should be conversant with the words of the whole play and *have* to memorise the words of the scenes in which they figure as well as the words on which they move.

If movements are taken irrespective of the word, the action is blurred and loses most of its meaning, tending to confuse the meaning of the word, and to distract. Imagine an orchestra playing a symphony wherein whole groups of violins, of cornets, or trombones came in two or three bars ahead or two or three bars behind as feeling moved them. What sort of pattern would they weave, what sort of whole would be produced?

Feel? Yes, let the players understand and feel what they are playing, let them appreciate to the full its significance, but they should never forget they are parts of a whole, bringing out a definite idea, with military or artistic precision and exactness.

Next comes a very important point. We must unfold our ideas by stages.

The thought of a big audience does not move simultaneously; therefore action has to be elongated over a length of time, or the slower-witted members of the audience would miss the significance. At the same time, each process of the action must be interesting and natural. So we phrase our significant actions, whether in group or individual. We allow time for visual expression.

Also, a gesture is effective or expressive, according to its relation with the other gestures that are being made. If emotion or inspiration prompted one player to raise his hand, while emotion was prompting another player to take a step forward, and another player was being inspired to clasp his hands, and another player to throw his hands above his head, those gestures might nullify each other. Whereas if a group of players threw up their hands, one by one or together,



or a single player threw up his hands while the group stepped forward, most expressive effects could be obtained ; but they would be obtained by conscious concerted action and only the director in front could decide if that concerted action, coming just when it did, emphasised the point that was being made, or whether it distracted the audience and confused the point.

All stage effects must be concerted. All concerted effects must be conscious. All conscious effect must be rehearsed until it is reliable. All effect must be subject to the decision of the director. Finally, all effect should be intelligently understood by the participants, who will thus add the weight of their thinking and feeling to their actions and make these actions truly significant.

Note that contrasts of movement can be obtained by building up with single figures, keeping the movement principally to one actor, with small reactions from the others. This corresponds to a movement where the theme is brought out by a solo instrument. After a certain time, however, it is well to break in with a group scene. Arrested movement or gentle stationary movement is important before any particularly significant scene. Never forget one can obtain as thrilling effects by a cessation of movement during whole passages or even scenes of the play as by the most thrilling cumulative movement, or contrast of moment.

A word here about slight irrelevant movement, such as arranging your hair, steadying your headgear, or even unconsciously moving your head or your eyes, between significant movement. The effect is precisely the same as if a player in an orchestra tried out his cornet, say when the violins were playing. Those small accidental movements are every bit as disturbing as small accidental noises. The attention of the audience is arrested, fixed on that group, and every movement must be significant. Moreover group movement must be economically used, or the audience will be disturbed and the movements will cease to be significant. Restraint and economy ; let them be our watchwords.

Let us sum up the main species of movement in six orderly divisions, because it is useful to have our tools and materials in orderly array.

## 1. GENTLE STATIONARY MOVEMENT.



This should be maintained during such lively tempos as an allegretto or an allegro, and can be expressed by silent conversation, small head or hand movements, gentle body swing of an irregular informal kind.

## 2. RHYTHMIC RIPPLING MOVEMENT.



Here the nebulous stationary movement becomes more clearly defined, by the repetition of a single gesture or a simple series of gestures, in rhythmic precision passing from one person to another.

## 3. DEFINITE BODILY ACTIVITIES.



Such as kneeling, bowing, drawing a sword, brandishing a fist, throwing out one's hand.

## 4. DEFINITE PROGRESSION BY STEPS.



This of course amounts to geographical changes. The manner of these progressions can be infinitely varied by tempo and rhythm,

but the point is that when a player definitely comes out of a stated place it has an instant effect upon the pattern of the whole, and a different effect from a movement by that player in his original place.

### 5. ALTERNATING OR CHANGING POSITIONS AND RELATIONS.



When one person and another change places, or one group and another change places.

### 6. INTERMINGLING IN NEW COMBINATIONS.



When characters from one group join and mix with characters in another group, or when separate characters form groups.

The last three are specially noteworthy because the whole colour scheme of a play is determined by the relative positions of the colours. Regard a play as a musical composition : plan it out into its " movements " just as a musical composition is planned.

Words, gestures, actions, and grouping can build up a definite movement, characterising a scene. Movement can be repeated : but it should always be varied ; and instead of only varying individual parts, vary the scene movements and see if the story of the play does not become clear and quicken into life !

EXAMPLE : AS YOU LIKE IT.

EXERCISES.—*Work out movement directions for :*

- (1) *Act I., Scene 2.*
- (2) *Act IV., Scene 1.*
- (3) *Act V. (group movements).*

EXAMPLE : THE FORTUNATE SHEPHERDS.

I. STAGE AND ELEVATIONS.

Elevations permit of movement in different portions of the scene, viewed vertically. Notice how the movement of the Bower scenes takes place in the upper half of the scene, through the use of draperies waved on sticks from a comparatively slight elevation.

Notice also how the movements of the actors bearing crooks fill the upper section of the scene. We get a sense of down and up, as well as back and forth and across.

1. SCENE.

Using the word "Scene" in its time value, we can work out the scene's distinctive movements.

Scene One : to housewife's entry (15). Gentle, stationary.

Scene Two : to dance (32). Definite bodily activities (*allegretto*).

Scene Three : to Shepherds' entrance (32). Progressions by steps (*Siciliano tempo*).

Scene Four : to Shepherds' departure (73). Intermingling in new combinations.

3. ACTORS.

The movements of all the Shepherdesses in the first part of the pastoral should be as timid and gentle, as they are bold and vigorous when metamorphosed by male clothes. Therefore scenes in which they alone take part should have a lamb-like innocence, a sweetly flowing *andantino*, with no sudden or forcible movement throughout.

The Gypsies should be snakish and furtive until they burst forth into rebellious flame : these movements must be broad, sweeping and exceedingly rhythmic : a tumultuous *largo*.

The wild outbursts of the Shepherds chafing to be off, are rapid and forcible, an *allegro* that partakes of march-time towards the finale, and ends in a repetition of the Gypsies' *largo*.

The Farmer's scene is like a rustic folk-dance in its tripping, bobbing, tuneful *allegretto*, formal and naive, with plenty of repetition mass movement : and this is followed by a scene built up of individual movement by turn, as each Shepherdess assumes masculinity : a repetition of the opening scene's movement but much stronger and more powerful.

## 4. PORTABLE PROPERTIES.

These should be regarded as active and impressive instruments of movement. In the last act, the contrast between the stout staves of the Forest Miners—something like truncheons—should contrast with the tall shepherds' crooks, and should be used in rhythmic opposition with a full realisation of the Miners' stout thrusts and flexible twirls of the more supple Shepherds.

The teasles which Tiffany distributes should be drawn through the wool with lovely flowing gestures, giving a sense of rhythmic flow.

The wares which the Gypsies offer should be capable of being unwound, and gradually revealed, giving opportunities for sinuous movements, both of hands and wrappings.

## 5. COSTUME.

Costume is too seldom designed with a view to the possibilities of movement. When distinct developments of character occur in individuals, their costumes should change to show clearly these changes.

The Shepherdesses are first seen in modestly concealing robes: then in cloaks and high boots they stride about: but they could never reasonably return to their old habits of costume, and in the last scene they appear with their old skirts kilted to their knees.

The costumes of the Farmer's family should be designed for billowy, bobbing movements, with the conventionality of herded, house-keeping rustics, uniform in type and a trifle clumsy. This type of costume must be thought out in contrast to the slender vertical lines of the Shepherdesses.

The greater freedom of the Shepherds must be expressed in their scanty tunics, as opposed to the shambling looseness of the Miner's attire, in wrappings, as of underground roots. Think of bulbs opposed to the waving spikes of leaves.

The Cloaks should be designed with a view to the actions of their wearers. Circular cloaks with slits for the arms, conceal the body and yet allow of free arm movement, unimpeded; as the arms lift, the cloaks are pulled into tumultuous folds: if they are not too voluminous, they indicate the action of the body.

It is good to think out the general costumes of a play as masses of moving stuffs and to think of this movement playing an active



part in the dramatic expression. It is sometimes as important that costume should restrain and impede movement, as that it should permit of it, or amplify it.

Sleeves should be thought of with regard to arm-movements: tunics, skirts, and breeches with regard to leg-movement. There is no part of costume which can be divorced from the body it clothes.

The shape and style of shoes are of supreme importance, in exaggerating and modifying feet-movements. Airy dancing movements in high boots would be spoiled because high boots at once suggest weight: but light and nimble steps in sandals are appropriate.

Finally, headgear is of supreme importance. First, its shape should always be considered not only in relation to the face, but the movement of the figure: a neat and nimble effect cannot be obtained if there is a suggestion of top-heaviness. But importance, weight and dignity can be obtained by building up the head-dress. It may form a background for the face, but it must be carried about and around, and may become obtrusive to the point of monotony if a large patch of headgear runs about all over the stage. One can get too much of it.

Too insistent headgear can also confuse and obliterate lines of movement. If the principal effects are to be obtained through the raising of scarves or mantles with corresponding amplification of the figure, in new shapes, the headgear should be kept insignificant so that the full effect of the arm movement can be felt. A head can be suppressed by a hood or handkerchief—*vide* the Gypsies.

On the other hand, if a character is to specialise on nods, and bobs of head movement, directing and managing, like the Housewife, an important structure will increase the significance of the movement—especially in contrast to the simple heads of the Shepherdesses.

The dramatic actions should also be aided by costume and colour designed with a view to movement.

For example, in "The Fortunate Shepherds" the dramatic action of the play entails the need of the Gypsies entering almost unperceived, and gradually increasing in importance. The actors can be greatly aided by a cloak, which can be tightly swathed round one of the Gypsies, to flash out in a blaze of colour, almost masking the Bower, as the Gypsy extends her arms in threatening gestures. The use of one large cloak in this way, will heighten sufficiently the



effect of the second Gypsy's brilliant trappings, and if, with her one can get the effect of tattered ribbons waving on her arms, the scene will be well enforced.

In the same manner, the use of heavy cloaks when the Shepherdesses enter in the second act, will increase their importance as a unit and add substance and strength to their masquerade in masculinity. But if the Shepherds returned from the town also in cloaks, this duplication or repetition would dull the eye to their re-appearance in the dyed cloaks which fill up such a big proportion of the arena as they are displayed. Consequently the Shepherdesses shed the cloaks as they depart, and the Shepherds pick them up before the short scene with the Miners, fold and throw them over their shoulders as scarves, preserving full freedom for their arms.

So it will be seen the right method of costuming, is to dress the dramatic action.

#### EXERCISES : THE FORTUNATE SHEPHERDS.

1. *Plan the movement scenes in Act II. from the point of tempo.*
2. *Plan the movements of Act I. after the Shepherds' departure according to the six classifications.*
3. *Design Tiffany's head-dress and shoes for Acts I and II., keeping in mind her movements.*

FIFTH DIVISION

Grouping

## V. Grouping

"The first dramatist understood what the modern dramatist does not yet understand. He knew that when he and his fellows appeared in front of them the audience would be more eager to *see* what he would do than to *hear* what he might *say*. He knew that the eye is more swiftly and powerfully appealed to than any other sense ; that it is without question the keenest sense of the body of man. The first thing which he encountered on appearing before them was many pairs of eyes, eager and hungry . . . . . To these, and all, he spoke either in poetry or prose, but always in action : in poetic action which is dance, or in prose action which is gesture."

GORDON CRAIG : " On the Art of the Theatre."

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The value of systematic grouping can hardly be over-estimated. Group formation involves classification : it entails clear, orderly thinking—getting away from the welter of detail and conflict of personalities which threaten to submerge company and producer, and sets up a hectic confusion round dramatic productions instead of the atmosphere of peace and order which should attend them.

Dramatic production should be a stern discipline : a perpetual extension of short-sighted views : a getting away from the personal to the impersonal, from the one to the many, from petty considerations to large ones.

The first need in production is order : the second is recognition of the law of growth and allowance for development. A play is expressed by living intelligence, and the production should admit of growth through repetition.

The secret of successful grouping is to begin on a sufficiently large scale, and then gradually to become more defined, after the Biblical method of creation.

First, there is light—perception of the general idea.

Then, division of the main issues : then, the gathering together of the different elements : then the individualising of each group, after its kind : then, the leaders of each group brought out : then the movements of all things in their appointed order, until man and the universe is completely manifest.

Never let it be forgotten that man is the culmination of the creation of the universe, and if we wish to present a convincing picture of Life in Drama, we must present man in relation to the universe and his fellow-men ; not as an isolated person.

If we begin consideration of our caste as a collection of separate persons, we shall lose ourselves in fragments.

A Chauve Souris production is worth close study, as so many examples of different forms of grouping : each one being a perfect unit. M. Balaieff's conception is absolutely welded—actors, movement, and scene being seen and held throughout each item as a unified whole. Here is no dressing-up of people, who then perform against a background. Background and actors are one. Here is no square box-like or platform-like stage, on which people walk about in sublime unconsciousness of their relationship, either to one another, or to their surroundings. He gets away entirely from the shape of the actual stage, because each item has its own shape or form clearly defined in his mental vision, that shape being a supreme characteristic. He may bring a row of peasants flat against a flat background : he may construct a group of statuary : he may aim at the low relief and grouping of a cameo : he may design an atmospheric picture, getting his effects by method III. light and tone emphasising spatial relationship (as in the Picnic Scene), but his vision remains intact and the actors express it. Moreover, he sees clearly and definitely as an artist sees : not as the usual stage-producer who pays so much attention to hearing and feeling, that he scarcely sees at all.

## EXAMPLE : AS YOU LIKE IT.

### 1. STAGE AND ELEVATIONS.

The nine divisions of the stage can be amplified by surrounding elevations, and in Act One, the grouping of Duke Senior's adherents can be consistently overshadowed by the dominating and encircling grouping of Duke Frederick and his circle, indicating that they are hemmed in and imprisoned.

## 2. SCENE.

If plain curtains are used as a general background, the garden scene can be indicated by drawing back the centre curtains, revealing a back-drop not too different in tone and colour, but with a suggestion of sky seen under the arches of a pergola or castle gates. The sense of imprisonment must not be lost. The centre curtains can be drawn again, and side curtains drawn back to reveal the sinister trees of Orlando's orchard.

Thus changes of scene are easy throughout the play: the wood being indicated by a further re-arrangement of the curtains, some being let down at the sides suggesting trees: openings made in the uniform surrounding curtains: and the steps at the sides irregularly revealed. Formality in the first act should be aimed at in the grouping of the curtains: followed by irregular grouping in the Forest acts: and in each case, the grouping of the actors should play up to and intensify the arrangement of the curtains.

## 3. ACTORS.

The general grouping of the characters is obvious, and will contribute much to the interest and continuity of the story.

*Duke Senior's adherents*: Orlando, the Duke and his Lords, Touchstone and Rosalind, and Jacques de Boys.

*Duke Frederick's adherents*: Oliver and his servants, Le Beau, Charles and Celia.

*The Forest folk*: Sir Oliver Martext and his flock, Corin, Silvius, William, Audrey, and Phœbe.

Follow this consistently throughout the play. It is a mistake to keep Celia linked with Rosalind throughout the Court scene: not until she makes the decision to leave the Court and ally herself with Rosalind's group should their inseparability be shown. Touchstone, however, is Rosalind's adherent.

Adam takes up his place behind Oliver; he merely talks with Orlando until he decides to join his group.

## 4. PORTABLE PROPERTIES.

The wise producer will make much of the gloves and handkerchief in the first Act: as of the twigs and staves and wreaths of woodland vines, the nuts and straws, and cottage posies of the forest. The more the actors are linked to Court, or to Forest by their belong-

ings, the more real will the scenes become. The properties, however, should be grouped, as well as the actors. A group of foresters occupied with twisted vines will tell out, whereas if one actor fiddles with a stick, another eats an apple, another twists a wreath, the effect is broken up with conflicting detail. But if business involving group-action with distinct groups of properties, is maintained throughout, far clearer effects are obtained. A branch of nuts is distributed and consumed : a basket of apples : a garland is twisted from a mass of vines, by united effort : osiers are peeled by a group of pages : and so on.

In the same way, a group of handkerchiefs are used as fans : several decorated gloves removed and toyed with and compared and admired : and pomanders played with and shared. A group may be of two or three, up to a dozen. The actions may be diversified, but the effect of the properties is clearer by means of group-handling.

#### 6. COSTUME.

Characteristic group costume is useful. In the Court Scene, the poor and despised dependents should be signified by plain attire, low-toned, and of similar shades of colour, in contrast to the ostentation of the usurper's group.

But Court costume will of course be worn. The cut will distinguish the wearers when they enter the Forest and confront (1) the group of exiles, whose Court dress has been modified, (2) the group of Forest denizens, uncouth and simple.

Each group should be characterised by various shades of harmonising colours : by a similar style of patterns : by similar cut.

This does not involve monotony, or individual obscuration. On the contrary it is of great help to the designer if he knows he must conform to certain limitations for each group, and then, can vary each member according to the general limitations.

Badges were common in that period : and Duke Frederick's and Duke Senior's adherents can be graced by their lord's heraldic device. Court pattern would be entirely different from the bright and artless patterns of the forest Shepherds. Nor need realism be perpetually followed. The designer has to garb the play and its people so that the audience can grasp immediately all about each that it ought to know : if a shepherd enters, let us know him at once by his crook or his fleece : a coquettish shepherdess by her garlanded hat or posied stomacher : a goatherd by his goatskin coat.



While fancy can run riot, the costumes must never confuse or distract attention from the group (or type) to which each individual belongs.

EXAMPLE : THE FORTUNATE SHEPHERDS.

1. STAGE.

With a stage chalked out into clear divisions, it is a comparatively easy task to allocate floor-space for groups, and for the groups to maintain their related positions throughout the scene. Within the appointed area they can act freely, and will yet present the appearance of a related group.

Let it be remembered that the stage is capable of being apportioned into areas of widely varied shapes. Groups may extend right across, keeping to one third of the depth, back, centre, or down the front : or they may cover a whole third across the depth : or close up into one ninth, or two-ninths or other fractions.

Again, groups may be circular or pyramidal : square, oblong : regular or irregular in formation : and though the floor-space can be drawn out exactly for the guidance of the actors, the effect from the front should be spontaneous and natural.

2. SCENE.

This question of the actors' relationship with the scene, should be fundamental : every object of the setting should be designed with a view to its dramatic service. A bank should allow of a pyramidal-like structure, different levels being provided for the actors, standing or seated, or recumbent, with due thought for the composition of the various groups.

Usually, a bank is a bank, and nothing more—it ought to be a carefully devised structural foundation for every group the producer desires : and hence, the designer of the bank must be acquainted with the use it is to be put to.

The bower must be considered as a background for groups, and be serviceable in enhancing the lines the group will form against it.

Every piece of furniture in a play should be considered from the point of view of its relationship to the actor, and its dimensions, lines, colour and decoration should be chosen in regard to its place in the dramatic composition.

3. ACTORS.

It is possible to tell the story through no other means than clear and effective grouping of the actors. As they walk through the play, they form a succession of changing relationships, and these should be visibly expressed.

Moreover, each change in the relationships of the actors should be clearly indicated. At any moment, one should be able to see clearly what these people on the stage are up to: and especially, their relationships with one another. Groups of characters connected by ties of sympathy, etc., should be kept as groups, from which individuals can emerge as the dramatic action calls them out. But the story must be obvious at every scene. This is quite possible.

If three Shepherdesses enter, lackadaisically carding wool, one can see a housewife entering and refusing it—just as one can see a group of gypsies creeping in, and offering trinkets, both half turned away, looking over their shoulders, to flash out suddenly into full-faced threats and defiance. Or one can see a group of Shepherds enter and mingle with a group of Shepherdesses.



One can also see a mingled group to the end of a scene and not have a very clear idea of what has happened except a general sense of squabble. But if one sees the Shepherds draw away, and each Shepherdess in turn approach her swain and almost win him: and then see all four Shepherds break away simultaneously and



see them resisting and driving off the Shepherdesses, and finally depart after the Gypsies, with the Shepherdesses driven back, left weeping and clinging together in a deserted group at the far end of the stage, the grouping has made the story clear.

#### 4. PORTABLE PROPERTIES.

Grouping in connection with, or round, movable properties is of great importance. A property, such as a crook, a staff, a basket, a wreath, may be an important symbol, visibly affecting the performers.

A crook or a staff may be used defensively, aggressively, protectingly. An effect may be increased by several people waving crooks or staves in the same way, thus multiplying the lines : or one person may use a crook or a staff as sign of leadership, and the other staves be visibly subservient. Again, crooks may be waved at widely differing angles, indicating disorder and confusion : they may be dropped at stated intervals, one after another subsiding from view : they may be raised again in sudden formation.

But their use should never be haphazard : nor their design left to an artist unacquainted with the producer's desires.

The crooks must be of the right shape, size, stoutness, colour : they must be neither too conspicuous or inconspicuous. The producer may need one picked out : he may need two-sided crooks which can give a change of light or colour : and while he is mentally producing the group action of the play, must mentally construct the properties, so that he knows exactly what effects should be obtained through their use in the general grouping of the play.

#### 5. COSTUME.

When a play with a number of characters is to be produced, group design in costumes helps to make the action simpler and the story clearer. The eye of the observer cannot assimilate unlimited detail : besides, a play is presented in a succession of pictures, and the audience must not be teased or confused by too much detail at any one moment : the thought should be left free to follow the changing scenes of the story, occupied with the unfolding of the complete structure of the play, so that at the end, the grouping of the actors is visually remembered.

Differentiation of costume there may be, if the general colour and shape is kept alike for general groups. When the individual comes to the surface of the group, attention can then be given to details, but such details should not obtrude until they are wanted : they should always be capable of being submerged in a group-mass.

Four Shepherdesses' gowns may be identical in hue and shape, but the stuff can be patterned differently, in complement shades of the same hue.

Their Shepherds' tunics can repeat the patterns of their sweethearts. Farmer's daughters can be identical in that each gown is the same style and shape and of gay floral patterns: but they can be as diversified as possible. Or they can stick to stripes and spots and checks. They can be of any range of colour as long as it is complementary in shade and hue and forms a whole mass, distinctive from the Shepherds.

Miners may keep to solid, unpatterned stuffs—differing in tone.

The more one breaks up a play into groups, and thinks of group action expressed pictorially, by the aid of group costume, the easier is the producer's task—and easier also are effects of variety and surprise.

But never forget, the group is one with the whole picture that the audience sees: and the architectural structure of the scene is the "group" *par essential*.

#### EXERCISES: THE FORTUNATE SHEPHERDS.

1. Design groups in any part of Act I in (a) circular, (b) pyramidal, (c) square, (d) oblong formation, on stage marked out in nine sections.
2. Design shepherdesses reclining on bank asleep—with plan of bank.
3. Design group of shepherdesses offering refreshment to farmer's family—bearing in mind the baskets as part of the group.



SIXTH DIVISION

Colour



## VI.

# Colour

“ By culture I mean the perception of every single thing in terms of the whole. Culture is seeing the point, the essential characteristic that defines the one thing, the one art or piece of art, the one action, quality, or idea, distinct from all others, but that at the same time establishes the relation of all things to the one. The essential point of a thing is—to use a term in physics—its light, the colour of its ray. And culture is the process of perceiving the light that shines from one thing upon another ; the antiphonal radiance existing in all things among themselves. . . . .

One of these places is where, against those iron bars and the hard mountains beyond them, the Princess and her ladies in their citron colour, their crimson, blurred saffron, rose and white, gold, silver, and black, sit on the balustrade above the courtyard, and the little hunchback below in his pallor and drab and green reaches up his lean hands towards the dazzling splendour of them.”

STARK YOUNG : “The Flower in Drama”

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A play should be thought of as a picture, and the style of its whole colour-scheme should be as clearly determined.

Realism is too often associated with thoughtlessness. Producers are content to assemble, or allow the actors to assemble, a heterogeneous collection of colours and shapes on the stage, and then imagine they have dressed the play according to real life.

The Idea of the play must be unfolded consecutively in colour, exactly as in movement or sound. The style of the colour-scheme must be in harmony with the presentation of the Idea.

At the first Summer School of 1922, we took three one-act plays as typifying different modes of colour.

The first, representing a group of Chelsea China, was visualised in the typical colours of the period ; lemon-yellow, puce, a cold pink, emerald green, orange, Vandyke brown, black and gilt, always

on a white or gold basis. The formality of the period was indicated by the studied proportion of the colours, the intense bright hues being balanced by the use of black and unified with gilt decorations on each figure.

The second play, representing the drab monotony of two spinsters' pre-war existence, and set in a bungalow on the lonely waste of sea-shore at Worthing, was worked out in monotones, sand and steel-blue relieved by white—the colours of a sunless beach. Grey tweed, lilac print, Jæger dressing-gown, faded cushions, fawn and drab, were all quite natural—while a row of scarlet geraniums at the window indicated the bright thread of one sister's chirpy point of view and later, the introduction of a deep blood-red scarf, batiked in sinister creeping lines, a scarlet blanket, and a man's blue and red dressing-gown emphasised the development of the plot when it warmed up into lurid action. Monotony was avoided by the varying proportions of the monotones, each predominating in turn as costume emphasised the colours of the background.

The third play was a modern satire: against a plain grey background brilliant colours passed processionally, portable floral trophies being hung on the wall, removed, and brought back later in a huge floral display, by one of the characters. The use of a dress-suit, relieved by a shock of auburn hair, made punctuation notes in the sequence of colours. Each scene was a consciously different arrangement of colour, the proportions of bright and dark being carefully planned so that the story was told in an intelligible sequence. When the excitement and gaiety faded out, the colour faded too. At the supreme moment, the colour piled up.

This means the producer must never see a play as made up merely of a background and costumed figures: properties are of immense importance, moveable or portable. Colour can be massed by mantles, cushions and rugs; changed by their reversal, removed by their removal. Colour can be transformed by the drawing of a curtain: the moving of a screen: the introduction of flowers: the shifting of furniture. Once let the colour plot be clear to the producer, his colour progression established, and it is his task to see that all things work together to bring out the picture appropriate to each scene of the play.

Another point to keep in mind is the possibility of submergence of colour, in colour; it is possible to obliterate costumes by placing

them against a background of the same tone or hue. On a small stage, figures you want to bring out or suppress in different portions of a scene, can be manipulated in this way.

Pattern is another point which must be stressed.

Pattern against pattern can become confusion: pattern with pattern can distract: pattern in judicious quantities against plain background can be of value. Remember a striking pattern is intensified by movement and be careful not to let too pronounced patterns or colours run about the stage too profusely: they must never distract from the main progressions of the story as it unfolds the different stages or scenes of the Idea.

The perfect use of colour needs a trained eye and colour-sense: but everyone can begin by a simple mental classification.

The different primaries:

*Blue*: greenish, purplish, greyish, pure (azure).

*Red*: purplish, greyish, brownish, pinkish, brickish, pure (scarlet).

*Green*: brownish, greyish, yellowish, bluish, pure (emerald).

*Yellow*: brownish, greenish, reddish, pure (cadmium).

*Purple*: brownish, greyish, pinkish, reddish, bluish.

*Brown*: greyish, purplish, greenish, reddish, yellowish, pure (Vandyke).

*Black*: purplish, bluish, brownish, greyish, pure.

*He can add*: dark, pale; bright, dull; monotone, pattern; to his categories.

He can then consider the proportionate use of each in costume, property, and background. Then the movement of the colours.

He may be helped to work out the idea through the symbolic use of colour, not because the audience will recognise the meaning of symbolic colour, but because the race responds more or less to the same colour stimulus, and "see red," enjoy their "purple patches," rise to "heavenly blue," and hope in "lively green," all the world over.

He can also study the effect of juxtaposition of colour, keeping in mind Appia's famous dictum, "the *mise-en-scene* is a picture *composed in time*." Hence his climaxes, his ends of acts, his structural compositions, his building up of the whole play, will depend largely on his use of colour in sequence. If he is going to electrify us with a

dramatic fulfilment in the story, out comes his carefully reserved colour, to which the preceding scenes have artfully led up by displaying its complementary. If he wishes to depress us, out will go the blaze of colour we have been enjoying. He may build up a scene by such gradual introductions of a colour that its full effect is gained almost unnoticeably: and he may startle by sudden unprepared-for introduction. Let the producer use colour as a medium of expression and concentrate on unfolding the different scenes through its use, keeping the individual parts subordinate to and part of the whole scene, yet paying attention, of course, to each part and colouring it appropriately.

A trap for the producer, is, however, the use of colour apart from its dramatic value. Too often gorgeous colour catches the eye with thrilling effect, and the producer feels the use of such a colour will be equally thrilling to the audience. He forgets it may do so, with disastrous results to the thrill they are getting from the play. The gorgeous colour may distract attention from the drama to itself.

Beautiful background curtains (especially if they have to be used for many productions) are a snare of the most subtle order: one overloads the perceptive faculties of the audience with this continuous appeal of one intense colour. One can use monochromes against stronger colour, and get one's effects by black and white and silver and gold patterns, successfully: but it will be found very hard to "down" such a background with colour in the costumes. It can be done: and the use of black, grey and neutral backgrounds is an easy get-out, and perhaps they are equally a snare for the timid and the indolent because one only has to think of the procession of actors and the pattern they make and not of their relation to the scene. But at the same time the courageous producer who slings in his violets, blues, emeralds, scarlets, or oranges *en masse* for a setting, must realise he has to be up and at it in good earnest, if his story is to speak out more insistently than his setting.

As I said, it can be done. There is no colour against which pauses, and culminating climaxes, and surprises, disturbing or satisfying, can't be made: but I advise producers to be sure of their ability to develop dramatic colour sequences against neutral or subdued backgrounds, (varied backgrounds, too, with colour let in and taken out as needed) before coming to grips with an uninterrupted colour-blaze around the whole stage.



How then to bring out the main Idea of a play through its COLOUR? Its General Form? By what Method? Keeping in mind the Movement, and Grouping?

EXAMPLE : AS YOU LIKE IT.

1. STAGE AND ELEVATIONS.

It is astonishing how much atmosphere may be given to a scene by the judicious use of colour in costumes amplifying and intensifying the colour of the background. In the Court scene, and Garden, we may use madder-brown hangings against which crimson, purple and gold, with white, will glow like a Holbein. Olive green and bottle green may be introduced in the Garden scenes and Orchard scenes respectively. But in the Forest, the same madder-brown hangings can be diversified with hangings of dull green, and the rest of the greens left to the properties and costumes.

2. SCENE.

In the Forest scenes the use of patterned curtains or screens, or even decorative woodland knolls, banks, bushes, etc., are to be commended, as one wants to break up the formality of the plain Court background and give a flickering sense of light and shade. Patterned green curtains, suggestive of foliage, can be introduced with the original madder-brown of the court scene, showing between, suggestive of tree trunks or avenues. If the same tone of colour is used in the accessories introduced, they will blend with the background and not attract attention to themselves too insistently. One wants to aim at the mottled, all-overish, indistinguishable pattern of a wood, amongst which people appear, and melt into the landscape and vanish.

3. ACTORS.      5. COSTUME.

While the Court characters need to stand out from the background, relieving it with all possible magnificence and splendour, the exiles and rustics need to melt into and seem part of the wood.

The whole gamut of green and brown may be used, with berry purples and reds, but these hues should never be striking. Brightness can be gained by yellow greens, gold, emerald, and viridian, and gradual sequences of brown or green can be skilfully built up, cul-

minating in supreme high notes without interfering with the general sense of mystery. If, however, a series of unrelated costumes appear, a grass-green Rosalind, an umber Celia, an olive Orlando, a sepia Corin, a bottle-green Silvius—although the general scheme of greens and browns has been adhered to, the effect will be fragmentary and distracting. Here is where grouping comes in. If we keep our Court purples and russets for the Rosalind group, adventuring into reddish-brown for Orlando, we keep the wanderers distinctive from the longer-residents, Duke Senior and his court, in warm and glowing olive and golden greens and emeralds and greenish and dull blue. The Shepherds in neutral colours, grey and fawn and yellow, working up to Silvius, Phœbe, and Audrey, who have decked themselves with orange or yellow, but never pinks or blues.

A pink or pale blue Phœbe will never appear and disappear into the Forest shades. As for a pink or pale blue Celia, fleeing from her father, even Shakespeare will be downed by that mystery. The hide-and-seek of woodland exiles is impossible in bright pink or pale blue. Celia's vivaciousness must find expression in a colour tuned to her woodland setting: remember she smirched her face with umber and put herself in poor and mean attire: "so shall we pass along and never stir assailants." Rosalind, too, has to devise the: "safest way to hide us from pursuit that will be made after my flight."

#### 4. PORTABLE PROPERTIES.

In the Court scene, the chairs, pomanders, fans, banners can stand out, increasing the effect of decoration: in the Forest scene the staves, garlands, baskets, etc., should be capable of merging into the background. Yet one must be able to bring out an effect at will, of greater brightness or of greater depth: of relief from monotony: of comfort or splendour: by the use of the properties. The feast affords opportunity for profusion of subdued rich colour: the play with Orlando for the introduction of silvery peeled osiers until the scene is lightened with them, like the shafts of Rosalind's wit: the courting of Audrey and Touchstone for a gay pattern of posies or wreaths, flower after flower being assembled until a sense of crude, coarse geniality brightens the scene.



A producer, watching mentally the passage of the play, may feel the need of relief in certain passages, a change or heightening of the general forest dimness. Let him introduce the needed colour with properties in the form of natural and appropriate business.

EXERCISES : AS YOU LIKE IT.

1. *Work out Stage, Scene and Elevations throughout, diversifying the Forest slightly for each act.*
2. *Work out costumes for Rosalind, Celia and Touchstone's flight to the Forest.*
3. *Design properties for the feast.*

EXAMPLE : THE FORTUNATE SHEPHERDS.

The idea of the growth of independence can be expressed by the growth of a colour in the *mise-en-scene*, the colour increasing or diminishing according to the progress of the Idea.

Let us take Red as the symbolic hue of Independence, (courage, vitality, etc.).

We shall begin, therefore, with the coolest possible colour for the dependent Shepherdesses ; blue.

1. STAGE AND ELEVATIONS.

As the general character of the play is genial, partaking of the Golden Age, too cold a setting must be avoided. A pale, warm gold for bank, floorcloth and side-curtains, with a sky-cloth of pale lilac, sets a cheerful note.

2. SCENE.

The bower can amplify the gold, patterned with reddish-green and greenish-golden leaves and with the brightness of young oak, elm, and ash appearing later as the trees rise into sight (and leafage). In the second act, if the leafy garlands on the gold are removed, a starker air will be obtained, and the rise of the ash in black and pale green will produce a sinister effect.

3. ACTORS.      5. COSTUME.

The Shepherdesses in intense azure blue, distinctively patterned in a darker shade, or white or gold, showing an innocent white

chemise, with a white hat, are sheep-like in their flock-like appearance. The Housewife in deep plum and mulberry green strikes a darker note : and the Gypsies, in orange, scarlet, crimson, and magenta, veiled with purplish grey, introduce the keynote.



Having brought the play up to this point, one must carry the colour-sequence forward in an intensified manner, while still reserving the big effects of colour.

The entrance of the Shepherds in tunics of royal blue, lavender, violet and purple is a step in advance of the azure : and yet they are linked together by each swain's tunic being patterned like his mate's. The Farmer's family come in with flower-bed effect : pink, yellow, turquoise, magenta, dun, and chocolate, gathering up all the colours previously used, but in variegation diversified with plenty of young green. These effects have to be kept strong and vivid, to be still cumulative in value.

The second and last act begins with the entrance of the Miners against a plain gold Bower stripped of its foliage and the black draperies of the ash. They introduce the red of the sandstone and iron, with black, and deep blue-grey. The Shepherdesses in high black boots, white cloaks, black handkerchiefs, and brown hats, carry on the plainer, sterner colour scheme. The re-entrance of the Gypsies in cloaks of grey and purple, with their bundles of white linen, keeps down the colour to the predominating wintry note, and when the Shepherds reappear in their purple and violets, they but carry on the severer colour-scheme of this act, for they fall in with the general purples and neutrals : yet they pick up the colour by their patterned fripperies, and the gilt and silver of the town : and in some degree prepare the eye for the return of the Shepherdesses in azure, kilted now to show the scarlet and gilt of sandals and leg-ribbons.

The final picture of the Shepherds in their scarlet-dyed cloaks is built up with celerity by the Farmer's family and the Gypsies in their pristine splendours. It will be seen that not until the

advent of the dyed cloaks, is colour in large uniform masses allowed: that effect is reserved for the climax, and from that blaze of red, the brilliant colours that reappear tell out with new distinction.

#### 4. PORTABLE PROPERTIES.

By gilding the crooks, they will not only tell out against the dull gold bower when they are in motion, but will sink into it when they are rested against it.

Flickering flecks and lines of light are stimulating and vivacious. Pale gilt for the crooks, and coppery gold for the Gypsies' flasks and mirrors are sufficiently distinctive.

The wheelbarrow should be the deepest note of colour, a sort of *clou* for the gay posy of the Farmer's scene.

#### EXERCISES: THE FORTUNATE SHEPHERDS.

1. *Work out colour designs for scene and elevations, Acts 1 and 2 (autumn-winter and winter-spring).*
2. *Work out Shepherds' costumes—Acts 1 and 2, with final cloaks.*
3. *Work out Miners' costumes in relation to scene.*

SEVENTH DIVISION  
Sound

## VII.

# Sound

"I recognise . . . . . that we might play silences against words as we practically never do ; that we make almost nothing of the tunes of speech, which should, perhaps, afford us more than half our gain out of words. The playwright should compose tonally as well as literally, with musical structure underlying."

SHELDON CHENEY : "Modern Art and the Theatre."

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A production takes form in Sound as much as in Sight. The Idea must be expressed through this medium of Sound just as through the visual production. Think of the pattern of Sound the voices make, as you think of the pattern of sound a choir makes : arrange the scenes accordingly, grouping them into scenes which are high-pitched or low-pitched, fast or slow, loud or soft, bright or dark in tone, regular or irregular in rhythm. Subtle individual variations will, of course, evolve, but by grouping the main scenes into general categories, one can unfold the play in an interesting and varied way, highly contributory to its interest and significance.

Breaks between speeches are never, never to be allowed at the actor's personal volition any more than between bars in an orchestral performance. A break is a pause : and "personal" pauses can entirely kill the rhythm of the scene, impressive as they may be in their right place : but the right place must be considered in relation to the whole. An actor in working out his individual interpretation, may often "feel" like pausing : and even pausing often. All right : but supposing other actors in the same scene "feel" that way?

Speak—pause—speak—pause. No matter what subtle or violent facial expression, business, etc., is going on, the pattern of sound is perpetually checked, until the scene drags to boring point. The tune is gone ! Try playing the most melodic tune : note—pause : two notes—pause : four notes—pause, etc.

Now it is odd that on reading this, the actor may begin to feel unbearably impeded by this mythical Producer: but let him once get on to the professional stage, and he will soon find the producer's demand that he pick up his cues—that they all “get along” etc., amounts to exactly what has been said here. The experienced producer mayn't think in musical terms, but he feels the need of that continuous pattern, instinctively. If he will consciously rough out the general “sound” divisions of the play, however, he will make a more interesting effect than when his instinct for the form of the drama, is being invaded and chopped up and generally fretted by insistent by-issues of business and the actors' personal emotions.

Think broad and big, think first in masses: and then, don't let the detail sweep in and chop up the big effects. If the effects are thoroughly dramatic, the actors will feel warmed and sustained as they come in contact with the audience's response and find the scenes are really going.

No actor knows if a scene *will* go, however carried away he and the company may be at rehearsal. The very effects which have brought tears to the eyes of the sceneshifters, or evoked intensive teeth-grindings and “My God, that's great” from the manager and call-boy alike—may sweep aerially into a cold void, when the curtain is up on the night.

So the actors may as well give the Producer's way a trial: and he, in front, if he has command of his tools, will be able to gauge when the effects should be broadened, or condensed, and exactly how. Nor will he invariably ask the author to re-write the play, though Heaven send the day when every author will realise that drama is a complex craft and not a literary art, and knuckle down to the long laborious task of learning it. To most modern playwrights as to most modern actors, drama is now a business of reciting words in a setting pleasing to the eye, and as photographically suggestive as possible, of the scene in which the words are supposed to be spoken.

Unless the musical feeling of playwright and producer is true, and knowledge of the fundamental laws of music has developed it, they cannot go very far in the production of drama on a rhythmic basis. Many have as yet no realisation that there is any such goal or that musical understanding is a path thereto.



For detailed guidance, the producer is referred to the second Greenleaf Element: Speech, which gives major divisions of the variations possible to voice as follows:

- (1) Pronunciation; (2) Accent; (3) Pitch; (4) Speed; (5) Volume; (6) Tone; (7) Rhythm.

EXAMPLE: AS YOU LIKE IT.

#### PRONUNCIATION.

The contrast between the different groups should be marked by pronunciation: also Orlando's lack of education must not be obscured by over-refined pronunciation. Adam is a servant, but not a yokel: Phœbe is as rustic as Corin, Silvius, William and Audrey. Duke Frederick's courtiers speak more mincingly than Duke Senior's Forester-Lords.

#### ACCENT.

The double motive of the enemy *brothers* can be at once established by stressing the words indicating the relationship of the different families, with special attention to the possessive pronouns. Extra accent can be placed upon the words relating to the central idea of escape through subjugation by reflex *action* of the hearers at such words as "servitude," "banished," "exile," "pursuit," "flight," etc. The words relating to the central idea of each Act should be carefully sought for and stressed.

#### PITCH.

A change of pitch should mark Rosalind's change of sex: and her scenes with Orlando can be diversified by her return to her natural pitch as she forgets her supposed sex—with sudden reassumption of the low pitch. Jacques should assume the deepest pitch of any, to indicate lugubriousness: from him one desires dark tones. Generally speaking, the rustics should use a lower pitch than the Court visitors.

#### PACE.

Shakespeare's plays should be taken at a consistently rapid pace, and especially the explanatory scenes. Clear diction and intelligent action can be trusted to make the sense intelligible. Too often

the scenes are ruined by over-characterisation and over-emotion. Pauses should be rigorously avoided, however filled with by-play or business.

When pauses are introduced they should be as intensely significant as pauses in a musical composition. Plentiful use should be made of change of pace. (a) Suddenly at the entrance of Charles or Le Beau when the talk speeds along *prestissimo*: (b) gradually, from Duke Frederick's entrance, the speed accumulating to *prestissimo*, until "the youngest son of Sir Rowland de Boys" occasions a thunder-clap of consternation, expressed by a mass movement in a vocal pause: the Duke's speech, halting and broken, is followed by a general picking-up of the pace, expressive of the tumult of indignation and quick championship, wherein the love of Orlando and Rosalind finds expression in halts and stumbles until Le Beau's re-entrance ends the scene at express speed. Mark the change to slower pace at the beginning of the next scene until Duke Frederick's entrance changes the action into racing excitement, not let down or slackened, but rather building up again to the rush of the climax—Escape: a slight pause before each chooses her name, increasing the effect of the final speech. In Act II., Scene III., between Adam and Orlando can hardly be too fast. When people are fleeing, they do not wait upon the order of their going. Old men are garrulous, but they can babble as swiftly as any.

#### VOLUME.

The change between Act II., Scene III. and Scene VI. can be marked by decrease of volume rather than pace: Orlando's low-voiced breathlessness expressing the desperate nature of their case far better than loud-voiced declamation. Duke Senior is throughout quiet and gentle: he sets the tone to his Lords and their scenes express the peace of the Forest, which should not be overcome by Orlando's too-lusty tones on his entrance on the feast; pace can be quickened, but he is still hard-pressed for breath.

#### TONE.

The tones of the characters should help to bring out the atmosphere, both of environment, and the dramatic action. The Forest hush should be portrayed by the hushed tones of the players on entering it—especially for the first time.

Again Duke Frederick's commands to his Lords, and again to Oliver, Act II., Scene II., and Act III., Scene I.—should be whispered, typifying the secrecy and urgency of his venom.

The tones of Rosalind should be as bright as they are ingenuous and contrasted with the suaver and more sophisticated tones of Celia, deliberately softer to contrast with Rosalind's impetuous, more vibrant, positive tone—the contrast of an oboe and a horn.

The Scene with Silvius and Phœbe, Act III., Scene V., should be a study of contrasting tones, pronunciation and pitch helping to form a rougher coarser set of tones in contrast to the mellow brightness of Rosalind.

#### RHYTHM.

Again, the student is referred to the chapter on Rhythm in "Speech": but in brief, the prose of Shakesperian comedy is a dance rhythm and needs to be said trippingly, the meaning being well studied and the accent nicely and economically placed, but the sentences and speeches to be said with full delight in their irregular cadences: the verses and songs are the lyrical high-lights of the tuneful scenes: and when in Act III., Scene IV., Touchstone rhymes and dances off, Sir Oliver's concluding lines are as lyrical and tuneful, a culminating flourish. Then come Celia and Rosalind with their lovely answering cadences, heavier though not much slower, until Corin's entrance lifts the Act into a formally rhythmic measure: if the "free verse" or prose, is tunefully said, the musical effect of the definite metrical passages will fill the hearer with extraordinary satisfaction.

The effect in Act IV., Scene III., of the irregular rhythm, halting into emotional uncertainty after Oliver's speech, is most beautifully indicated, as if the music was ebbing away as Rosalind grew paler and paler for all her endeavour to put a brave face on it.

#### EXAMPLE: THE FORTUNATE SHEPHERDS.

##### PRONUNCIATION.

The pronunciation of shepherds and shepherdesses: housewife, farmer and family: gypsies: and miners should be in four distinct divisions.

The shepherds and shepherdesses should show a native gentleness and softness by a nicer pronunciation than the others; the housewife, etc., should be somewhat broad, with matter of fact, plain

speaking. The gypsies should give an indication of a foreign accent, expressed in punctilious carefulness of vowel and consonant, and the miners should be the broadest of the lot.

#### ACCENT.

The producer should go through the whole play with a view to determine the major words that need to be accented in each scene. This does not involve a meticulous underlining of each part, but merely a stressing of the chief words that tell the story in each scene. Words can be emphasised by a change of pitch.

#### PITCH.

Pitch can be used to differentiate characters very well, but a producer is also wise to mark out certain whole scenes in clearly contrasting pitch. If everyone keeps a fairly low pitch for the opening scenes, Tiffany's entrance can be marked by a uniform change to a higher note: then the gypsies' scene will start and remain in a sustained low pitch, velvety and rich—suggestive of mystery and colour.

In a group play (though indeed in any play) more vivid and memorable effects will be gained by strong differentiation of scenes, rather than of the actors' individual parts: but when whole scenes cease to be cast into a uniform pitch, a chequered effect of group against group or part against part can be obtained through the respective use of pitch: or scenes or individual parts can gradually ascend or descend.

#### PACE.

On the pace at which the lines are spoken, an immense amount depends. Unfortunately, for plays demanding thought or the portrayal of emotion, too slow a pace is often enforced, so that the audience can have time to take in the meaning of the words. But this is usually because speech alone is being relied upon to give the meaning. The actors come on to the stage, one by one, intent on the art of speech, and perhaps of facial emotion: but the unfolding of the meaning of the play through significant colour grouping and movement is usually unconsidered. Consequently the audience doesn't get sufficient help in rapid comprehension of the inner content of the words, and the rhythmic structure of the play is unmercifully dragged out of shape by over-insistence on speech as sole instrument of expression.



One of the first things a choir has to master is the art of phrasing in lieu of hammering out each note ; it also has to master clean articulation : but this doesn't prevent it from mastering every graduation of pace and being able to articulate and phrase just as distinctly and meaningfully, whether at a rapid or slow pace.

Like amateurs' pruning, which can hardly be too severe, the average pace for amateur performance can hardly be too fast ! As long as the movement, the changes of grouping, the articulation and phrasing, are intelligent and meaningful, the pace of the play, especially a rhymed play, should be swift enough to carry the whole scenes along in melodic swiftness : if they are played too slowly, one misses the impression of the whole in over-concentration on each part.

The calm scene of the Shepherdesses can slow down to increase in speed for the arrival of the Shepherds. Again, a gradual tailing off, after their departure, prepares us for the Farmer's entrance,



and yet, the final declamation of the Shepherdesses would be fatally ineffective if the final scene were too solemn. Declamation can be broad and large, without dragging. The French stage sets the world an example in their rapid declamation, which might well be followed—even though the need of exquisite articulation and illuminating and beautiful gesture have to be mastered to make rapid diction intelligible. Difficult, but possible : and why should actors jib at demands only similar to those made by the arts of music or dance ?

If a rapid pace is kept up throughout the two acts of the play, an agreeable diversity will be afforded by the Interlude of the Trees. Here, the distinctly slower pace should give a picture of the quietness and stationary peace of trees, in contrast to the shifting groups of humans : and if the pace quickens as they perceive the Shepherds, or later, the Miners, it should give the effect of wind stirring their branches ; even, at the end of the Ash's last scene, quickening into the violence of a gale.

It is a good plan, after the actual divisioning of scenes and acts into their respective speeds, to try and mentally hear the whole play as a whole, marking out the gradual slowing or quickening of the big effects—the climaxes—the “pictures”: keep in mind the value of sudden transitions: the impressiveness of gradual building-up to speed, and its gradual slowing: and above all, the supreme value of pause—(each as carefully regulated by silent “beats” as in an orchestral symphony)—if a continuous pattern of sound has been maintained.

#### VOLUME.

Volume is even more important than Pace: it corresponds to Quantity: how much sound is the producer allowing in his pattern? How much sound is Beethoven allowing in the Finale of his Concerto, and how much in the Adagio, or the Andante cantabile? Supposing that tremendous surge of volume which crashes out in the final roar of the uprising wave, was hurried through at a modest mezzo-forte? Equally, suppose the ineffable softness of the Trio's opening, invaded by a jaunty mezzo-forte from the oboe? However right the notes, the speed, the phrasing, the player's personal emotion and interpretation—would not the major portion of the effect be gone if volume were not regarded as an essential tool of expression?

Just so with drama. And volume is not a tool for casual, spontaneous and unrelated use by any single actor, no, not even the Lead. Volume is controlled by the producer alone, it falls within the conductor's jurisdiction and it is for *ensemble* or individual group as the producer decides. He should use it consciously for beginnings and ends of scenes, as well as cumulatively, or suddenly.

#### TONE.

There are three ways in which it is necessary to consider the problem of tone.

First—the tone of the whole play: the general quality of sound. Is the sound pattern to be formal, or is it to be atmospheric? Are the contrasts to be clearly defined, or should effects impalpably melt into each other? And what is the general quality of the composition? The remoteness of Debussy? The passionate vehemence of Wagner? The chromatic subtleties of Delius? The naivete of a folk-song? There is a certain intangible quality which should be quite clear to the producer, and which influences his productions throughout.



And then there are the tones of the different scenes which should be as contrasting as the tones of different parts of pictures and finally there are the tones of the different voices, corresponding to different instruments.

#### RHYTHM.

Metre is an excellent training in rhythm, but it is only the beginning: metrical accent and interpretative accent are entirely different matters for consideration, and the two together are necessary for dramatic rhythm. Unless intelligence is actively at work in bringing out the meaning of the words, by accents sometimes quite opposed to the regular metrical accent, the metres will become mesmeric snares, and the players will sink into their regular sing-song as they abandon themselves to the mesmeric rhythm of ballroom dancing. They may enjoy it, but to the spectators, the performance will be unbearably monotonous.

Metre is a serviceable and even an appropriate setting for the sense of the words: but it must never be allowed to obscure the meaning of the words. Consequently, the speaking of metrical verse requires rather more intelligence in interpretation, than less. The fact that one is speaking poetry, in a pleasant tune, does not relieve one of the necessity of thinking: nor, on the other hand, does it necessitate a different process of thinking or interpretation. Poetic is not a synonym for high-faluting! The more natural intelligence one can demonstrate in the speech of poetry, the better the audience will understand its meaning: and if a nice perception of the metrical form accompanies the accent of its meaning, beautiful rhythmic deliverance will ensue, much more satisfying to the simple and the subtle alike, than the heavy emotional wallowings that too often translate our honey of Admettus into a gluey stickfast paste, as cloying as it is stultifying, but which is accepted with extraordinary meekness as the genuine poetic brand.

The other extreme, of course, is to mutilate the metre until it is unrecognisable, and by capricious accenting, turn a beautiful web of verse into unrelated strands of prose. Any change from metre to metre in individual parts or in whole scenes, should be distinct, and the change of each metre must be definitely and decisively established, so that the audience perceives the metrical pattern. Nothing is more confusing nor wearisome than to hear actors emotionalising

poetic parts to such an extent that the metrical form of the play is completely lost.

Other points, as well as these, have been exhaustively treated in the Element on "Speech."

EXERCISES : THE FORTUNATE SHEPHERDS.

1. *Work out group contrasts of miners, shepherdesses and shepherds, in pronunciation.*
2. *Work out Shepherds' return scene, Act II. in (a) pitch, (b) speed.*
3. *Work out Shepherdesses' scene after battle, and Miners' and Shepherds' re-entrance, in volume.*

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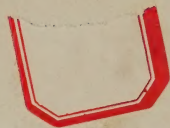
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